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United Nations

Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund

Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2018

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Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund

Report on the first and second regular sessions and annual session of 2018

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Part one
First regular session of 2018

Held at United Nations Headquarters from
6 to 7 February 2018

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I. Organization of the session

A. Election of officers of the Executive Board

1. The Executive Board elected as President the Permanent Representative of Norway to the United Nations, Tore Hattrem, and as Vice-Presidents the following Permanent Representatives to the United Nations: Tekeda Alemu (Ethiopia), Durga Prasad Bhattarai (Nepal), Miloš Vukašinović (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Rubén Armando Escalante Hasbún (El Salvador).

B. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

2. The President of the Executive Board paid tribute to the leadership of his predecessor, Mr. Walton Alfonso Webson, Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Antigua and Barbuda, and acknowledged the contributions of the other members of the 2017 Bureau of the Executive Board. He congratulated UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta H. Fore on her recent appointment to the position, remarking that her achievements and previous experience would greatly benefit UNICEF.

3. He said that the session had come at a critical time for the work of the organization and for children around the world. Despite enormous global progress over the past few decades, the lives and futures of children in every society remained marked by discrimination, poverty, inequity and lack of access to basic services, as well as the effects of climate change. At the same time, the greatest displacement of children since World War II was under way. In responding to those challenges, the work of UNICEF would be guided by the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which had been crafted with a keen recognition of the organization's dual mandate to protect children's rights in both development and humanitarian settings.

4. The ambitious achievements of the Strategic Plan could be realized only if action were taken on the recommendations made by Member States in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (QCPR) to reposition the United Nations development system and to carry out the requisite reforms.

5. In this regard, the President appreciated the initiative led by the Presidents of the funds and programmes in 2017, looked forward to taking it forward and encouraged timely discussions on issues relating to reform among all the Boards.

6. He said that the reform discussion also required an examination of how to improve the Board's working methods. In this regard, he would seek to make the Board's interactions more effective, open and transparent, and encouraged increased Member State participation.

7. The Executive Director expressed thanks to the Executive Board as well as to the Secretary-General for the opportunity to lead one of the most consequential organizations in the world and for lending their commitment and ideas to the UNICEF mission. There was no more important cause than children. She also expressed thanks to the previous Executive Directors, in particular, Mr. Anthony Lake, whose leadership had left the organization in an enviable position as a credible, respected partner in serving children and young people around the world.

8. She spoke of her recent trips to observe UNICEF programmes in action, and of how impressed she had been when witnessing the effective work that the organization was doing in maternal and child health and with children affected by armed conflict, among other areas.

9. The Executive Director emphasized that a sustainable future was attainable only by focusing on the most disadvantaged children: those living in situations of conflict, discrimination or poverty. Such children were a reminder of why equity was at the heart of the Sustainable Development Goals as well as the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which emphasized continued cooperation with Governments and other partners and a commitment to the Secretary-General's plans for reforming the United Nations. Working with its sister agencies, UNICEF was implementing the commitments it had made in the common chapter, drafting clear, flexible guidance for the country offices and using existing mechanisms, processes and programmatic activities to drive collaboration, while avoiding duplication. It was also examining ways to leverage its development impact and collaborative advantage. Initiatives emerging from that analysis would target collective results and joined-up effort for transformational change, with a focus on the continuum between humanitarian and development work, and offer a sound basis for partnerships with other entities of the United Nations development system and beyond, including non-profit organizations, foundations, national and local governments and international, national and local businesses.

10. She noted that the global business community was transcending its traditional role as a donor and helping UNICEF to reach children and young people in new, more effective ways. UNICEF would develop at least 30 priority integrated partnerships with companies to accelerate results for children, including delivering education to hard-to-reach communities through online learning tools; reducing the cost of toilets and water delivery in refugee camps and disadvantaged areas; continuing work to shape vaccine markets; and using drones to deliver test results to remote locations.

11. Over the previous 20 years, UNICEF had contributed to unprecedented progress: more children were living to their fifth birthday, more were going to school and fewer were stunted than ever before. However, as the world community committed to completing unfinished business focused on the first decade of a child's life, more was needed to address the second decade. The significant opportunity of adolescence was matched by enormous challenge. Following current trends, only 1 in 10 young people would gain the secondary-level skills that they needed by 2030. To address this gap, UNICEF was pursuing an ambitious agenda calling for every young person to be in school, training or employment by 2030, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable: girls, children on the move and those living through humanitarian emergencies. UNICEF would create and shape this agenda with a full range of partners. As with the child-survival revolution of the 1990s, such collaboration would achieve more results with the help of such accelerators as knowledge, data, digital solutions and innovations.

12. The Executive Director expressed her appreciation for the greatest asset of UNICEF — its staff — noting that in the short time that she had been at UNICEF, she had been enormously impressed by them. She was committed to supporting them and they, in turn, would support the children and the young people around the world.

13. She also expressed gratitude to the National Committees and the millions of donors who contributed to the UNICEF mission. Last year was a record year for the organization's fund raising, with 70 per cent of revenue coming from government partners. However, the majority of unrestricted funds, covering UNICEF staff and its intellectual leadership, was raised by the National Committees. She thanked all the UNICEF partners and supporters for their donations, large and small, and for advocating for children and young people in their communities and in the halls of power.

14. Finally, she thanked the Board members for, year after year, demonstrating their commitment to and vision for a better world for every child, and for being UNICEF champions in the support of children and young people around the world.

15. The President opened the floor to general statements.

16. The delegations congratulated the President and Vice-Presidents of the Executive Board on their election and welcomed the new Executive Director of UNICEF. They also expressed their great appreciation for the work of the previous Executive Director.

17. Several delegations emphasized that the Strategic Plan must be implemented within the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the reform of the United Nations development system, especially regarding system-wide collaboration, which would be critical to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Several delegations said that UNICEF, given its size, influence and strong track record on the ground, should show leadership on delivering a more integrated and coordinated United Nations presence in programme countries, working with other agencies to strengthen the pivotal role of the country teams and the Resident Coordinator as well as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). Noting that UNICEF, like other organizations in the United Nations development system, could be impacted by reform in the near future, a delegation expressed its appreciation for the position of the Executive Director that the purpose of reform was to improve results, and it commended UNICEF for its mature approach as an organization, with much experience in the field, broad representation in countries, a stable financial situation and innovative approaches for achieving sustainable development.

18. A delegation emphasized that reform of the United Nations must be centred on development, with poverty eradication as its primary task and resources mobilized for that purpose, while another delegation said that UNICEF should focus on the Sustainable Development Goals that related directly to mothers and children.

19. A group of delegations urged UNICEF to take the lead in the collaborative work committed to in the common chapter of the Strategic Plan, notably with respect to joint modalities in funding, analysis, planning and evaluation, with the comparative and collaborative advantages of the organization at the centre of such engagement. A delegation added that it expected UNICEF to take an active role in developing complementary and mutually reinforcing partnerships, rather than competing with other stakeholders. The group requested an update at the annual session of 2018 on the ways in which UNICEF was responding to the reform agenda, linking that response to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

20. A delegation emphasized that the launch of the Strategic Plan provided UNICEF with an especially important opportunity to reinvigorate and sustain the tremendous yet fragile gains achieved in maternal and child survival, including by strengthening the linkages between its health and nutrition programmes. The delegation from Japan referred to its pledge of $2.9 billion to advance the cause of Universal Health Coverage (UHC) around the world, and said that the country looked forward to the active role of UNICEF in the promotion of UHC on the ground, especially for children. The Executive Director noted the pledge and her appreciation of the country's leadership on health care, and said that its connection with UNICEF work in nutrition would be very powerful.

21. Several delegations and a group of delegations called on UNICEF to direct its efforts towards the most disadvantaged children, in accordance with the Strategic Plan, with some delegations noting that children were the most vulnerable sector of society, with hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy, abuse, diseases, discrimination and the impacts of climate change and conflict affecting them most adversely, especially in the least developed countries. Several delegations emphasized the importance of the close monitoring of results and increased transparency as essential to ensuring that

assistance was effectively delivered to those in need. The Executive Director said that UNICEF was focusing on increasing its access to real-time data to better assess how programmes were performing and welcomed input from the Board on the innovations of businesses and non-profit organizations that might provide examples of accelerators relevant to UNICEF.

22. Delegations discussed the dual humanitarian-development mandate of UNICEF and the ways in which the organization could best balance, integrate and strengthen its work in the two areas. A delegation said that UNICEF should focus on the ways in which interlinkages between the two mandates could help to fulfil the Sustainable Development Goals, with another delegation urging UNICEF to lead the way by helping to build resilience to crises; focusing on prevention and sustainable pathways out of emergency response; and taking an innovative approach to humanitarian action that broke down silos and promoted collaboration. A delegation said that the integration of humanitarian action as a cross-cutting priority in the Strategic Plan provided an opportunity to strengthen the links between humanitarian and development efforts in vital sectors, such as education, and to deliver assistance in a manner that met urgent needs while promoting sustainable development. The Executive Director responded that it was important for the seeds of development to be implanted in humanitarian programmes in order to achieve sustainable solutions, and that UNICEF would be reviewing its programmes to that end.

23. A delegation cautioned that while development and humanitarian efforts should be mutually reinforcing, UNICEF should not focus only on crisis settings nor consider its work through a "crisis lens" in developing countries that were not experiencing a crisis. Development challenges were everywhere, including in peaceful countries, so the humanitarian-development nexus should not be a universal approach, but rather should be directed to the context in which it belonged. The delegation added that boosting preparedness and resilience was very important, but there was a limit to what UNICEF could achieve regarding crisis prevention. This would result only from conflict prevention, a task of the United Nations, as a whole, and the Member States, in particular.

24. Several delegations emphasized that, while ensuring the coherence of its humanitarian and development interventions on the ground, UNICEF must respect humanitarian principles. A delegation noted that such respect included neutrality and a non-selective and non-politicized approach to humanitarian assistance, and national ownership and leadership in development work, with the national Government as the primary partner at the country level.

25. A delegation called on UNICEF to act upon the recommendations set out in the synthesis evaluation report "Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016", while a delegation encouraged the organization to ensure that it was positioned to provide critical leadership consistently, starting with the onset of an emergency, and emphasized the importance of working across the United Nations system to strengthen implementation, joint needs assessment, coordination, technical oversight and overall leadership to achieve a more holistic approach in emergency response.

26. A delegation supported the UNICEF commitment to ensure the protection and fundamental rights of children in emergencies, including armed conflict, and added that, given the growing number and intensity of emergency situations, the efforts of UNICEF to provide children with food, primary necessities and medical assistance, including psychological support, merited respect.

27. A delegation noted that global displacement due to humanitarian crises was at the highest level ever recorded, with the most at-risk being women and children, and

that some countries were overburdened with the hosting of refugees. A delegation called for a greater sharing of responsibility by the international community, since it was their joint concern to give child refugees a good start in life. A delegation said that young refugees and migrants should be prioritized in the negotiations on the global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration and on the global compact on refugees, as called for in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1).

28. Several delegations noted the importance of a human rights-based approach to development, including with regard to gender equality and disability, and of unwavering support to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, while several delegations said that gender equality and the empowerment of girls and young women must be emphasized as one of the cross-cutting priorities of the Strategic Plan.

29. Several delegations expressed agreement with the preventive approach proposed by the Secretary-General, with health, education, nutrition and other development challenges addressed before they became crises.

30. A delegation appreciated the increased emphasis given by UNICEF to early childhood development and several delegations called for a greater focus on capacity-building and the empowerment of adolescents, including a readiness to tackle all the issues important in young people's lives, from protection and education to sexual and reproductive health and rights. A delegation encouraged UNICEF to listen to and give voice to older children.

31. A delegation emphasized that quality education, coupled with technical and vocational training, was necessary to build the skill sets for gainful employment and a path out of poverty. A delegation expressed support for plans to increase the contribution of UNICEF in establishing accessible education focused on the long-term needs of the labour market, work that should be done in close coordination with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Executive Director noted that she had spoken with the head of UNESCO on ways in which they could collaborate on education for young people.

32. A delegation highlighted the connection between universal free education and the efforts of UNICEF to decrease the impact of HIV/AIDS among children and adolescents, and called education a human right. Another delegation said that education was also of critical importance in emergencies and protracted crises and must be a priority for UNICEF to ensure that whole generations were not sacrificed. Education also contributed to the construction of peace and was a major lever for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

33. A delegation mentioned the increasing risks for children of new technologies, including the use of the Internet to draw children into the sex industry, and urged UNICEF to continue its work to confront emerging challenges.

34. Several delegations appreciated the efforts of UNICEF to become more efficient, cost effective and accountable, while a delegation requested that the organization make even more efforts to reduce management costs, harmonize partnership agreements, provide transparent and comparable cost structures and strengthen accountability.

35. Several delegations emphasized the importance of adequate, predictable, reliable and flexible funding. The delegate from Sweden said that his country would continue to prioritize core support and flexible non-core funding, announcing that its contribution to UNICEF in 2018 would be approximately $80 million. The Executive Director thanked Sweden for its support and noted that core support was what drove

the intellectual leadership of an agency and enabled the organization to hire staff, the most important part of any entity.

36. A delegation said that UNICEF had achieved remarkable results in raising funds from and building partnerships with the private sector, which had given a boost to its regular resources and contributed greatly to the improvement of the situation of children worldwide. A delegation welcomed the innovative digital private fundraising strategy. One delegation cautioned that the priorities of UNICEF should be determined in accordance with the interests of recipient countries, however, not of companies and private funds. It was important to ensure a true spirit of social partnership and not allow UNICEF to be used as an instrument for the promotion of commercial interests.

37. Several delegations emphasized that the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda and the Strategic Plan must be translated into increased investment in transformative interventions. Pathways included leveraging the unique normative standing of UNICEF to change the underlying factors affecting children by (a) championing upstream policy advice; (b) engaging and finding synergies with the private sector on a non-financial basis; (c) promoting multi-stakeholder partnerships; and (d) driving innovation. A delegation said that UNICEF had a role to play in every country context through advocacy, including in developed countries, and through the National Committees.

38. The delegate of World Vision urged the Board members to keep a close watch on the debate in the United Nations to guarantee that children's rights and well-being were central to policy decisions that would affect their lives. The Co-Chair of the NGO Committee on UNICEF and the representative of the ChildFund Alliance concurred that children and young people should have a voice in the decisions that affected them and the opportunity to participate in identifying problems and solutions.

C. Adoption of the provisional agenda, timetable and organization of work

39. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2018/1) for the session.

40. The Secretary of the Executive Board announced that 37 observer delegations, including one intergovernmental organization, one international organization, six non-governmental organizations and 14 National Committees for UNICEF had submitted credentials, in accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to the recommendations and decisions of the thirty-ninth and fortieth Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS Programme Coordinating Board meetings

41. The Director, Programmes, introduced the report (UNICEF/2018/EB/2), which was presented by the Associate Director, HIV/AIDS.

42. Several delegations welcomed the comprehensive report, in which UNICEF demonstrated its valuable role as a co-sponsor of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). The Executive Board would have liked the inclusion of the discussions from the forty-first meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, since they addressed the budgetary shortfall through the revised operating model.

43. A delegation expressed appreciation for the UNICEF achievement in scaling up the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, and commended the increase

in antiretroviral treatment coverage among women globally. However, it noted that some regions, including Central and West Africa, were lagging at both the individual and societal levels, with serious implications.

44. Several delegations noted that, despite general progress in the HIV response, the prevention of HIV infections among children and adolescents in vulnerable situations was stagnating. A group of delegations welcomed the leading role played by UNICEF in the "All In" initiative and its efforts towards integrating HIV and drug-dependency services. It suggested that, to enhance synergies, such interventions could be linked to the Global HIV Prevention Coalition's HIV Prevention 2020 Road Map. The group noted the importance of strengthening health and community systems to achieve a sustainable response, adding that fragmented and vertical interventions were hampering efficient national implementation.

45. Regarding the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, the delegation noted that the strengthening of community facility linkages was a key factor for positive outcomes and urged the scaling up and sustaining of such efforts. The Associate Director responded that one key outcome of such linkages was its impact not only on HIV prevention but also on the access of women to antenatal care, retention in care and the proportion of women returning to facilities to give birth.

46. The group of delegations also urged the scaling up of other successful initiatives, such as the joint testing platforms for HIV and tuberculosis and the integration of HIV testing within maternal and child health services, and it welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to identify additional evidence-based advances in integrated programming. Primary HIV prevention, including evidence-based biomedical interventions, was critical, especially among adolescents, and the group commended the continuing support to social protection, including cash transfers, to keep girls in school.

47. A number of delegations pointed out that different populations faced different challenges regarding HIV, notably adolescents, especially girls and young women, for whom prevention efforts were failing. It was therefore essential that UNICEF programmes advance gender equality and strengthen the links between HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health and rights; comprehensive sexuality education; and gender-based violence. It was noted that such integrated programming made sense from an efficiency perspective, but also because adolescents needed information, knowledge and services, including prophylactic measures, to increase their ability to protect themselves from HIV, unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections. Such programming would involve challenging social norms and gendered structures.

48. Noting the recent financial challenges for the sector, the group of delegations welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to mitigate the effects of reduced budgets by means of internal resource reallocation and the further integration of HIV/AIDS work across the organization. It also noted the progress regarding the new country envelopes and looked forward to receiving updates on lessons learned. It asked for information on the ways in which the country envelopes would provide an opportunity to address significant challenges, given the dramatic situation among women, children, young women and other key populations in many parts of the world. The delegate of UNAIDS responded that the country envelope deployed resources where they were needed, and that UNAIDS was documenting lessons learned in the initiative's implementation as its contribution to the process of United Nations reform. The Associate Director noted that UNICEF welcomed the realignment of resources to the country level, enabling the refocusing of its efforts on differentiated responses, which were tailored to local context.

49. The group of delegations encouraged all UNAIDS co-sponsors to place greater emphasis on making results reporting more strategic, including reporting on the achievements of the Global HIV Prevention Coalition.

B. Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action

50. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the oral update. A background paper (UNICEF/2018/EB/3) was available.

51. In general statements delivered at the opening of the session, several delegations commended the organization's work and leadership in efforts to protect children, particularly in emergencies and other humanitarian crises.

52. A group of delegations acknowledged that the number of complex and large-scale humanitarian crises had continued to grow during the previous year, with UNICEF pressed to respond quickly and effectively. Within that context, the group welcomed the conference room paper on emergency preparedness. The group aimed for deeper dialogue on how, in their respective roles, the Member States could best conduct and improve their contributions to crisis prevention and response. UNICEF was expected to play a key role in strengthening the nexus between humanitarian and development programming to reduce vulnerability, build resilience and promote rapid recovery and transition. Increased country-level spending on humanitarian action came with a responsibility for increased transparency. The group looked forward to the annual report on humanitarian action, which was to be presented at the 2018 annual session, and outlined some areas in which reporting could be expanded. Another group of delegations urged that higher priority be given to building resilience in long-term development programmes.

53. During the general statements, several delegations stressed that UNICEF should focus on combining its development and humanitarian expertise. Among other actions, this would require UNICEF leadership to respond more effectively to urgent needs and invest in preparedness, while strengthening and rebuilding systems.

54. Among the additional recommendations made by delegations in relation to the humanitarian efforts of UNICEF were that the organization should work across the United Nations system to respond to emergencies; accelerate efforts to advance efficiencies and report on how value-for-money was ensured; act on the recommendations made in the synthesis evaluation report on UNICEF humanitarian action; and make reports on humanitarian action more strategic and forward-looking. Such reports should also cover UNICEF contributions to global humanitarian reform processes and the ways in which the organization prioritized financial and technical resources and addressed funding gaps.

55. Several delegations stressed the importance of securing flexible and predictable resources for an effective humanitarian response, with one delegation reporting on its efforts to improve the quality of its funding with a multi-year contribution to the humanitarian thematic fund, and another reporting that it had doubled its annual humanitarian budget in the previous year and would continue the increase in the current year.

56. A delegation emphasized the key role that UNICEF played in minimizing the impact on children of the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic, delivering essential services and keeping the children from becoming a lost generation. The delegation asserted that the forthcoming Executive Board discussion about the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF would be critical to an improved humanitarian response.

C. UNICEF programme cooperation

Country programme documents

Middle East and North Africa

57. The Regional Director presented the country programme for Jordan (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.1). He praised the hospitality of the country regarding refugees from the region, who numbered close to 3 million, half of them children, welcoming them, for example, into the public-school system. He noted the tremendous achievements of Jordan in areas such as universal primary education, water and sanitation management and declining infant and child mortality rates, despite the challenges, and noted the innovativeness of many of the country's development initiatives regarding adolescents and young people, including nurturing them as peace builders and informed, engaged and healthy social actors. He noted the beneficial reach of the country's work in this regard for the region and for south-south cooperation.

58. The representative of Jordan thanked the country team in Amman and the staff in New York for their support and collaboration in the development of the country programme, which was in line with the Government's 2025 Strategy, with its focus on the most vulnerable children and the building of resilience in families and communities. He noted that Jordan was a middle-income country and was working to safeguard its high rank in the human development index. He asked that Member States continue to support the country as it faced its challenges, noting that its work to leave no one behind would benefit not only Jordan, but the entire region.

West and Central Africa

59. The Regional Director presented the country programmes for Ghana (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.2) and Mauritania (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.3) and the common country programme for Cabo Verde (DP/FPA/OPS-ICEF/CCPD/2018/CPV/1). In Ghana, UNICEF would support the Government through equity-focused policy advocacy; the documentation of innovative solutions for strengthening national systems; and service delivery focused on the most vulnerable children and adolescents. The Mauritania programme was aligned with the national Strategy for Accelerated Growth and Shared Prosperity 2016–2030. It would facilitate the production of data and analysis to better support advocacy and resource mobilization for children, and contribute to the implementation of cross-sectoral policies based on equity-focused interventions. The common country programme for Cabo Verde of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF had been developed around the 2030 Agenda and the mandates of the three agencies. The programme would support the National Sustainable Development Plan, 2017–2021, with a focus on technical assistance, capacity-building and advocacy, combined with interventions in particularly disadvantaged municipalities, with an approach based on a child's life cycle. UNICEF would contribute to the four priorities of the programme.

60. The representative of Ghana thanked UNICEF for its assistance in contributing to the country's marked decline in under-five mortality, improved access to clean water and sanitation and increased primary school enrolment as well as its child protection and poverty alleviation programmes. It was anticipated that the new country programme would enhance those successes.

61. In view of the country's recent transition to middle-income status and a projected decline in official development assistance, UNICEF would require a different approach to engagement with the Government, namely the balancing of service delivery efforts with systems strengthening. The Government looked forward to continued support from UNICEF in meeting its obligations to children towards the

attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and related national development strategies for the welfare of children.

62. The representative of Mauritania said that the country programme was being considered in a regional and interregional context marked by the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the African Union's Agenda 2063. The Sahel region had been involved in a subregional partnership and had been working on public policies to meet the challenges of achieving peace, security and sustainable development. The role of UNICEF was important in accompanying the Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel) Youth Network, in which Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Niger and Mauritania were also involved, given child and social protection concerns, particularly among vulnerable populations. Organizations promoting the United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel had also taken into account the efforts of the various agencies working with the G5 Sahel. The representative expressed the Government's gratitude to UNICEF for its cooperation, and highlighted the good work and ongoing efforts of the country team.

63. The representative of Cabo Verde underlined the crucial role played by the United Nations system in the country's development process, with the joint office providing high-level, cross-sectoral and integrated policy advice with the capacity to galvanize and coordinate a strategic partnership with the Government. To achieve the goals of the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations development system would need to deliver in a more functional and effective manner, adopting an integrated, universal and coherent approach. The delegation appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General to reposition the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.

64. The representative said that a concern was the imbalance between core and non-core funds for both the UNDAF and the country programme. More flexible and predictable funding methods needed to be explored. The mobilization of funds would be a key determinant for the full implementation of the joint programme, with special assistance required to mobilize innovative funding and close the implementation gap.

65. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/1 (see annex II).

D. Plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021

66. The Executive Director made some short comments, emphasizing that evaluation should be considered a learning tool. UNICEF would be considering the speed, focus and scale of evaluations, including possibly producing one evaluation item every 30 days, so that evaluation could become a powerful tool for the organization, linked to its learning programme.

67. Following the Executive Director's remarks, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, introduced the plan (E/ICEF/2018/3), followed by the Director, Evaluation Office, who presented it.

68. A group of delegations commended the Evaluation Office for following up on the recommendations of the previous plan's evaluations, and welcomed its intention to increase the quality of evaluations and cooperate with other United Nations agencies to strengthen evaluation competence at the country level.

69. The group also commended the progress towards the evaluation of UNICEF work in humanitarian situations, especially the annual evaluation of Level 3 emergencies. It welcomed the humanitarian evaluations planned under each Goal Area of the Strategic Plan.

70. The group expressed concern that fewer evaluations had been planned for the period 2018–2021 than had been for the period 2014–2017, and that several

evaluations had been carried over from the earlier period. The delegation requested assurance from UNICEF that the evaluations would be completed on time, especially since the number of planned evaluations rose in 2020 and 2021. The Director responded that it had been the practice to roll over evaluations that had not been completed in the previous term into the next. In addition, the previous plan had indicated when evaluations would start, not end, with the assumption that some would be rolled over. It was also important to anticipate delays, especially in humanitarian contexts, where it was not unusual for programme sites to be temporarily inaccessible. He emphasized that the Evaluation Office would always share such information with the Executive Board. Regarding the increased number of evaluations in 2020 and 2021, some areas of the Strategic Plan would not be mature enough for evaluation before then.

71. The group of delegations stated that it was necessary to allocate sufficient resources for the evaluation function to ensure the delivery of good-quality evaluations, but noted that the plan mentioned the risk of delayed delivery if resources fell short of projections. It requested clarification on how the current harmonized cost-recovery policy contributed to evaluation and how adjustments might secure sufficient resources. The Deputy Executive Director responded that the funding for evaluations came in part out of the cost-recovery institutional budget mechanism, and that a pooled fund for evaluations was being designed and would be presented at the workshop to be held the following week. She added that evaluation, like other areas, had to show effectiveness, efficiency and value for money. This included deciding whether to use a big firm or an individual consultant, with the aim of carrying out real-time evaluations and avoiding delay.

72. The group also questioned why the plan did not include funding for methodological studies. The Director responded that the plan contained a section on methodological studies and that such funding was partially covered under country programme evaluations, in line with the move towards real-time evaluation.

73. The group noted that only one evaluation was dedicated to gender equality, and urged the integration of that and other equity considerations into all evaluations. The Director responded that gender equality was one of the criteria used for every evaluation, with the evaluation of the Gender Action Plan providing an overarching assessment of the work of UNICEF in the area. The group welcomed the five planned joint evaluations to be undertaken with UNDP, UNFPA and the United Nations Entity for the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), and emphasized that increased collaboration was critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. It requested a joint evaluation covering the five areas of collaboration set out in the common chapter of the Strategic Plan.

74. The group requested that a management response accompany every evaluation report and that an update on the implementation of actions be included in the annual report on the evaluation function. It also requested options regarding which evaluations and management responses would be covered at Executive Board sessions the following year. The Director responded that the implementation of management responses would be included in the annual report. He requested flexibility in the determination of which evaluations would be presented at the Board sessions.

75. Finally, the group noted that the report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: our promise for dignity, prosperity and peace on a healthy planet (A/72/684–E/2018/7) included the goal of establishing an independent system-wide evaluation unit. The group encouraged the Evaluation Office to support such a unit. The Director responded that UNICEF was actively working with the United Nations Evaluation Group to contribute to ongoing discussions on the system-wide evaluation unit.

76. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/2 (see annex II).

E. Road map to a revision of the evaluation policy of UNICEF

77. After an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the Director, Evaluation Office, presented the road map.

78. A group of delegations and another delegation said that previous reviews of the evaluation function, including by the Joint Inspection Unit, the Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network and the United Nations Evaluation Group, showed that some areas required further development in the new policy, namely, its alignment and harmonization with those of the other funds and programmes; the independence of the Evaluation Office in the selection of its Director in agreement with the Executive Board; the reporting line between the Office and the Board; the selection of evaluation topics by the Board; the use of evaluation for learning, steering and accountability for system-wide learning at the global and country levels; the reinforcement of the evaluation capacity and of professionalism within UNICEF, including national capacity; a clarification of the ways in which a theory of change for evaluation would be monitored and evaluated; further elaboration of the interaction, responsibility and accountability among the three levels of the evaluation function; and a further explanation of how the new policy would promote the use of new and improved technology.

79. One delegation stated that the proposed reforms regarding evaluation and the Strategic Plan were consistent with the expectations of Member States. The proposed methodology, tools and accountability framework were in alignment with the frameworks adopted by the other funds and programmes, for example, UNDP, and appeared to be able to deliver the expected results.

80. Delegations urged UNICEF, given the importance of the evaluation policy, to provide Member States with adequate time for consideration of the draft and the provision of feedback.

81. In national statements delivered at the opening of the session, a group of delegations acknowledged the contributions that UNICEF had continued to make to improve the lives of millions of children, while encouraging the organization to accelerate its institutional improvement, learning from its progress and challenges through an evaluation process that further enhanced delivery at the national level.

82. A delegation asserted that evaluation was essential to learning and the strengthening of institutional decision-making, accountability and effectiveness. The delegation hoped that UNICEF would review the methodology for evaluating country programmes and seek the views of the Executive Board members and programme countries, and that, in revising its evaluation policy, UNICEF would take into full consideration the practical situation facing country teams.

83. The Deputy Executive Director said that she looked forward to the workshop with Member States that had been scheduled for 12 February 2018. The gathering would provide additional clarity on the matter that would be useful for the Member States as well as for UNICEF. She stressed that the new evaluation policy would be a good driver for consistency within UNICEF as it would clearly outline accountabilities and required capacities. Early approval of the policy would therefore be critical to the timely implementation of the reforms. The organization would make all efforts to ensure the timely revision of the draft and intensive interactions with the Member States to achieve that goal.

84. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/2 (see annex II).

F. Evaluation report and management response

Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016

85. The Director, Evaluation Office, introduced the synthesis evaluation report (executive summary: E/ICEF/2018/4), followed by the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, who introduced the management response (E/ICEF/2018/5).

86. A group of delegations welcomed the comprehensive humanitarian response of UNICEF between 2010 and 2016, as reflected in the synthesis evaluation report, and congratulated the organization on the positive findings of considerable progress and improvement.

87. The group noted that UNICEF had responded to 344 humanitarian situations in 108 countries in 2016, a striking number that reflected the shift towards more frequent, complex and recurrent crises, and called for intensified efforts to prevent crises, or at a minimum to better respond to them. In light of this increase, the group expressed concern that only 12 per cent of the evaluations conducted from 2010 to 2016 addressed humanitarian action, a significantly lower percentage than the budget share dedicated to such action. It therefore welcomed the commitment of UNICEF to increase the share of humanitarian evaluations, as reflected in the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021, and urged it to fulfil its commitment to spend at least 1 per cent of programme funds on evaluation, as called for in previous Executive Board decisions.

88. The synthesis report raised important questions around the ongoing challenges of delivering for children at scale in complex environments, while also maintaining the commitment of UNICEF to humanitarian principles and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action. The group of delegations expressed concern that these issues were addressed in only a few of the evaluations considered in the report. To help ensure that the relevant principles were upheld, the group requested that UNICEF update the Core Commitments with a more explicit rationale for specific operating contexts, and that they be underpinned by and comprehensively reflect a clear strategic framework for the work of UNICEF in protracted crises and for its integration of humanitarian and development work. A delegation asked the secretariat to comment on the timeline for updating the Core Commitments. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, responded that the scoping of the revision of the Core Commitments had already begun alongside a stock-taking exercise on the level 2 and level 3 mechanisms. Since the secretariat wanted the revision to be meaningful, especially regarding health emergencies and protracted crises, it would take some time, and the Director proposed updating the Board in early 2019.

89. The group of delegations welcomed the willingness of UNICEF to redefine the triggers for humanitarian evaluations, including the coverage of level 1 emergencies, and its commitment to improve the evaluation of links between humanitarian and development programming and of less-evaluated humanitarian issues, with innovative and strategically important programmes receiving particular attention.

90. The group noted the finding of the need for improved partnerships for humanitarian action, including with other United Nations entities, and commented on the lack of recommendations addressing the issue in both the report and the management response. The group requested that UNICEF address partnerships in future programming and that evaluations continue to provide concrete insight into coordination, collaboration and the contribution to collective outcomes in humanitarian action, a key aspect of the reform agenda of the Secretary-General. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, noted that UNICEF had made progress

in partnering with local humanitarian organizations and was committed to building the response capacity of national and local partners. The Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, added that UNICEF indeed worked closely and with a common voice with partners in its humanitarian response. He gave as an example the collaboration of UNICEF with the World Food Programme, without which the good results in severe acute malnutrition could not have been achieved.

91. The group of delegations welcomed the report's emphasis on needs assessment and encouraged UNICEF to continue to put needs at the centre of its interventions, including addressing underlying vulnerabilities in programming and improving results-based management; processes for collaborative action; and capacities for joint assessment.

92. Noting that the report revealed an inconsistent implementation of measures to ensure equity, the group of delegations encouraged the organization to strengthen its integration of equity into its humanitarian responses and to ensure that such measures were supported by adequate data, disaggregated by sex, age and disability.

93. The Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, agreed with the importance of needs assessment and disaggregated data, and noted their connection to equity. He added that UNICEF was committed to additional focus on these, both in its own work and for the work of the clusters that it led.

94. The group of delegations urged UNICEF to improve its efforts towards optimal transition out of crisis response; the prevention and overcoming of protracted emergencies; and the strengthening of long-term resilience. It asked UNICEF to ensure that programme design took these imperatives into account, whenever possible, supported by dedicated evaluations. The Deputy Executive Director commented that programme design was effective only if the programmes were funded.

95. The group of delegations noted the report's finding that it was not possible to determine whether the management responses to the humanitarian evaluations had contributed to organizational change, and therefore requested UNICEF to provide to the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2019 an update on the implementation of the actions to which UNICEF had committed.

96. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/2 (see annex II).

G. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016 and report of the Board of Auditors

97. The Executive Board had before it the UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016 and report of the Board of Auditors (A/72/5/Add.3), the related report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/72/537) and the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors contained in its reports on the United Nations funds and programmes for the year ended 31 December 2016 (A/72/355/Add.1).

98. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the report of the Board of Auditors was presented by the Director of External Audit (India) and Chair, Audit Operations Committee of the United Nations Board of Auditors. The Comptroller then presented the financial report and audited financial statements and provided a response to the report of the Board of Auditors.

99. The representative of the United Nations Board of Auditors reported that UNICEF had obtained a clear, unqualified audit opinion, and that the overall conclusion had been that, in recent years, the organization had taken steps to

strengthen financial and managerial control over its operations. However, weaknesses had been identified in some areas.

100. A group of delegations commended UNICEF for again having received an unqualified audit opinion without any modifications. It took note of the significant increase in the rate of implementation of the Board of Auditors' recommendations from 2015 to 2016. The group said that it would benefit from a formal management response to the Board of Auditors' report, which would allow UNICEF to showcase its successes in implementing the recommendations and facilitate regular and transparent communication with the Member States.

101. The group expressed support for the organization's plan to enhance fundraising, but encouraged management to develop conservative estimates of projected revenue for budgeting purposes. It appreciated the information on reported cases of fraud and presumptive fraud, and the steps being taken to increase the percentage of losses recovered. The group urged further alignment in the relationship between UNICEF and the National Committees. It encouraged UNICEF to take active steps towards the full implementation and further strengthening of the monitoring mechanism for the harmonized approach to cash transfers. It urged adherence to the guidance relating to costs charged to the programme budget to avoid the risk of reduced funds for programme delivery and to increase transparency.

102. The group said that it would welcome additional information on the outcomes of the UNICEF investment strategy for after-service health insurance. It expressed support for the auditors' observation on ensuring the alignment of investments with the organization's financial policies and on enhancing the use of long-term agreements. The group urged UNICEF to strengthen internal controls relating to vendor records. It also cited issues that increased the risk of delayed responses to emergencies, hindered programme delivery and affected value for money, and encouraged UNICEF to address them. The group stressed the importance of the timely completion of investigations, and urged UNICEF to prioritize filling vacancies in its Office of Internal Audit and Investigations.

103. Speaking in its national capacity, one delegation from the group asked what data had been used by UNICEF to conclude that the decrease in contributions to regular programmes was a result of the prioritization by donors of emergency programmes.

104. The Executive Director responded that a formal management response to the report had already been discussed and would be followed up. UNICEF would be taking on-board the important recommendations and suggestions relating to cases of fraud and presumptive fraud, alignment with the National Committees, cash transfers, the investment strategy, vendor records, supply management and audit and investigations. These were all in line with the organization's efforts to strengthen accountability and transparency and to simplify its processes. The organization had been making ongoing efforts to streamline and accelerate internal processes, increase value for money and reduce paperwork.

105. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/3 (see annex II).

H. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2018 workplan and proposed budget

106. After an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director, Private Fundraising and Partnerships Division, presented the 2018 workplan and proposed budget (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.1).

107. A group of delegations acknowledged the demanding fundraising goals outlined in the document, which represented a 7.5 per cent increase compared with the 2017 budget. The group sought clarification on whether the demand for the planned new

posts would cover the four-year period and whether the staff would work on non-financial engagement with businesses, especially at the local level. It also requested information (a) on reporting to better assess the workplan's six key outcomes and sub-goals; and (b) on the indicators used for measuring the efficiency of the use of funds and their effect.

108. More generally, the group sought additional information on how UNICEF intended to harness the power, reach and influence of businesses and would ensure that such partnerships were based on the organization's stance on child rights. It also requested more information on plans to reposition the private sector as a priority in the broader discussion of the reform of the United Nations development system; and how collaboration with the private sector would lead to the development of new technologies and innovation to serve the needs of children and families.

109. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees reported that, in accordance with the latest estimates, the National Committees had contributed approximately 84 per cent of the total private sector revenue to UNICEF in 2017, with $637 million of that amount in regular resources. The Private Fundraising and Partnerships Plan emphasized that the outcomes for 2018 would be largely dependent upon the efforts of the Committees.

110. Given their proven and growing role and in keeping with efforts to modernize the governance structure of UNICEF, the National Committees would welcome the opportunity to further explore their representation within the governance structure.

111. In comments made under another agenda item, the representative of the United Nations Board of Auditors said that the Board concurred with the findings of the UNICEF Private Fundraising and Partnerships Plan, 2014–2017, that untapped potential remained for corporate fundraising.

112. In response to the comments made by the group of delegations, the Director said that the workplan had been developed on the basis of solid data. Over the past few years, UNICEF field offices had been growing at a significantly faster rate than the National Committees and there was a solid evidence base for the plan to be successful if the organization were to place 35 per cent of staff very close to or within those markets and deploy a significant percentage of investment funds therein. To meet the goals for the following four years, a 12-per-cent increase in posts had been requested in 2018, to front-load investments and to focus on growing the organization's audience. In the coming years, the division would report on results achieved through engagement activities.

113. The Director emphasized that a revised approach to engaging business would be fundamental for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, specifically Sustainable Development Goal 17. A change strategy that included leveraging the power of business had been approved in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and the Division would report in its annual report on the associated key performance indicators. Likewise, the report would provide information on the ways in which the use and impact of funds would be measured.

114. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/4 (see annex II).

I. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2018

115. The provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2018 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

J. Adoption of draft decisions

116. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2018/1 through 2018/4 (see annex II).

K. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

117. The Executive Director expressed thanks for the warm welcome that she had received. She appreciated the ideas and perspectives of the participants and she was sure that UNICEF as a whole did so as well.

118. She noted that, as UNICEF embarked on the first year of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the support and ideas of the Executive Board would be essential. In particular, the organization welcomed the Board's support for the Secretary-General's reform programme. The organization was striving to achieve overall results and be more effective, with less duplication regarding its sister agencies. UNICEF had heard the concerns of the Board and was focusing on the implementation of the common chapter of the Strategic Plan.

119. The Executive Director said that UNICEF valued the Board's recommendations on humanitarian action, especially that it review its urgent short-term work through a long-term lens. While serving children in the midst of complex, fast-moving emergencies would always be at the core of its work, the Executive Director noted that when UNICEF supported the efforts of communities to rebuild schools or water, health or nutrition systems in aftermath of an emergency, it was not only making those communities more resilient; it was supporting their long-term development. As UNICEF continued to strengthen its focus on the humanitarian-development continuum across all its programmes, it would welcome the input of Member States, especially regarding programmes in their countries.

120. The Executive Director thanked the Board members for supporting the focus of UNICEF on the second decade of life. As the organization recommitted to completing the unfinished business of the first decade of a child's life, including scaled-up early childhood development work, UNICEF must also do more for young people in their second decade: their education, their skills development, their future job prospects. All of these mattered for the future of the world. Given the expertise and resources in this area of some of the UNICEF sister agencies, the second decade offered opportunities to expand inter-agency cooperation in accordance with the commitments made in the common chapter.

121. The Executive Director said that during the Board session, her first, she had seen strong engagement from the participants and a genuine partnership between the Board and UNICEF. The Board's support for UNICEF was not just for its programmes, the "what" of its work, or for its financial and funding strategy, the "how" of its work, but for who did that work. Such support for UNICEF staff, in country offices and in New York, resulted in the support of children and young people around the world. UNICEF was a team, and she thanked the President and the Vice-Presidents of the Executive Board, the Member States, the facilitators and the conference services staff, who had provided such good support during the session, for being members of that team.

122. The President noted that the first regular session of 2018 was the first session since UNICEF had begun the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, which looked ahead not only four years, but also beyond, to 2030 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. He emphasized that success would depend upon the will and creativity of many actors, including Governments, civil society and private sector partners, non-governmental organizations, individual donors and

UNICEF staff members across the globe. It would also depend upon the engagement of children, who would be the most affected by success or failure.

123. The President summarized some of the issues that had been discussed during the session. Achievements had been celebrated, such as the continuing decline of mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS and a new commitment to investment in emergency preparedness, and challenges had been recognized, including in the fight against HIV/AIDS among adolescents. He highlighted the unprecedented number of humanitarian crises around the world that, in 2016, had affected more than half a billion children, and he recognized the value, in that context, of the synthesis evaluation report on the humanitarian work of UNICEF, which identified successful action that the organization had taken in a number of dire emergencies, but also raised concerns about some responses, and made recommendations for improvement going forward. This analysis was crucial for programme designers, policy advisers and financial strategists, especially as humanitarian response commanded an increasing portion of the UNICEF budget.

124. The President noted that evaluation was one of the bedrocks of successful programmes. In an era of shrinking budgets, it was necessary to know what worked, what didn't and why, and to know this early, so that there was time for course correction. He commended the comprehensive coordination of the evaluations planned for the next four years with the Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan and the most crucial cross-cutting areas, and predicted that they would provide valuable lessons for improvement in results. He also noted the consensus around the importance of prioritizing and budgeting evaluation and of collecting the necessary disaggregated data.

125. The President said that he had been impressed during the session by the quality of the presentations, the thoroughness of the reports, the calibre of the discussions and the knowledge and passion that Board members brought to the task. It had made him extremely hopeful that the Board and UNICEF together would accomplish a great deal during the year to come.

126. The President again welcomed Executive Director Fore, who was attending her first Board session. He thanked his fellow Bureau members and the Executive Board members, as well as the Deputy Executive Directors, the staff of the Office of the Secretary of the Executive Board and the Department of General Assembly Affairs and Conference Services of the United Nations for a successful session. Finally, he thanked all the UNICEF staff around the world, whose commitment, enthusiasm and optimism about the possibility of a better future for children and for the world were the lifeblood of UNICEF.

127. He concluded by saying that he looked forward to working together in a spirit of hope and renewed commitment over the next year.

Part two
Annual session of 2018

Held at United Nations Headquarters from 11 to 14 June 2018

I. Organization of the session

A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

128. In his opening statement, the President highlighted that the annual session 2018 was especially pertinent because the Executive Board would focus on progress that UNICEF had made over the previous year in achieving its goals and facing challenges that had impeded its progress. The Board's ultimate aim was to foster the ability of UNICEF to promote and protect the rights of children around the world, including in humanitarian emergencies, and especially children furthest behind

129. He pointed out that the annual session was also significant in that it marked the end of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 and the beginning of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/9 and Add.1) took on additional importance as the final assessment of achievements and challenges. The Board would give the same attention to the final annual report on the implementation of the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/12).

130. At the session, the Board would receive an update on strengthening protections against sexual exploitation and abuse and against workplace sexual harassment. The President welcomed the concrete actions UNICEF was taking to improve its effectiveness and transparency in that area. Its success depended on the trust of its thousands of staff around the world, many of whom worked in dangerous conditions. The organization's acknowledgement of its shortcomings on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment was a positive first step.

131. The President commended UNICEF for its achievements in humanitarian action and welcomed its first annual report on humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2018/10). The scale, length and number of humanitarian crises had increased along with UNICEF humanitarian expenditure so that the Board had requested a full report in 2018. He drew attention to the organization's crisis interventions, and called on UNICEF to continue to strengthen the humanitarian-to-development continuum, including through close collaboration with other United Nations system organizations.

132. He underscored that education best embodied the critical continuum between development and humanitarian work. The quality and consistency of education in crisis settings was crucial to preparing children for life after conflict. He stated that in 2017, UNICEF had reached nearly nine million children in humanitarian situations with formal or non-formal education.

133. The President welcomed the revision of the evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/14), and underlined that its strategies for increasing the quantity, value and usefulness of evaluations would guide the work of the organization going forward. He looked forward to discussing ways to modernize the Executive Board, building on the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243) and resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. He gave high priority to the 2017 paper of the Presidents of the Executive Boards on joint matters and had put forth a draft decision laying out changes to the UNICEF Executive Board.

134. In her address, the Executive Director began by thanking the outgoing Secretary of the Board, Mr. Nicolas Pron, for his leadership, consensus building and diplomacy throughout his tenure, and welcomed the incoming Secretary of the Board, Ms. Hai Kyung Jun, who brought extensive experience in donor relations, resource mobilization, policy design and intergovernmental affairs.

135. The Executive Director presented her vision to accelerate progress for children and young people, grounded in the targets established in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and in the United Nations reform agenda. UNICEF would accelerate how it drove results by scaling up its work in four priority areas.

136. The first was to intensify UNICEF work to integrate development approaches into its humanitarian responses, as part of the humanitarian-to-development continuum. The emergency response must not only save and improve lives in the short-term, but must also to help fragile communities and countries to recover, rebuild and avoid backsliding in the future, thereby planting the seeds of development.

137. The second was to expand the UNICEF focus on local solutions at scale. Experience had shown that community health systems with community workers were the most effective means of delivering primary care to underserved populations. UNICEF would work closely with Governments to design and deliver those services through their formal health systems, which would be critical to reaching universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals vision of health for all.

138. The third was to build partnerships around the United Nations Young People's Agenda. As it strengthened support for children across the first decade of life and consolidated the gains made as they grew, UNICEF would focus equally on the second decade of life. In September 2018, UNICEF would bring together partners from every sector and across the United Nations system to design, scale up and deliver the education, training and support that young people needed to shape a better future for themselves and their societies. The Young People's Agenda would help UNICEF to deliver on its commitments to young people set out in the Strategic Plan.

139. The fourth was to pursue and apply innovations in every aspect of UNICEF work, and include technologies that delivered services in hard-to-reach communities. That included products and programming that supported children's growth, development, education and protection. Those services needed to be supported by equally innovative approaches for public and private financing and service delivery.

140. She stressed that central to the four priorities was the organization's determination to expand partnerships with Governments, foundations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the private sector. It included strengthening collaboration with other United Nations development organizations to accelerate progress towards the Goals and delivering more efficiently and effectively, as part of operationalizing the common chapter of the strategic plans of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women). As businesses continued to transcend their traditional role, UNICEF looked to work with them to find new, effective ways of reaching children and young people still left behind.

141. The Executive Director underscored the role of UNICEF staff. The organization was committed to making zero tolerance a reality for harassment and abuse of authority and sexual exploitation and abuse, both for staff and for the children and young people. UNICEF had strengthened and simplified its reporting mechanisms and investigation processes, and was committed to better screening for new hires. In 2018, it had created an independent task force to review its practices and provide recommendations to prevent and address gender discrimination, harassment and abuse of power. UNICEF had obtained EDGE Certification (Economic Dividends for Gender Equality Certification), the leading global assessment and business certification standard for gender equality.

142. UNICEF was equally committed to a culture of accountability, excellence and learning, and supported staff members in their training needs. To introduce new

perspectives, it had launched a senior fellows programme to bring talented individuals from the public and private sectors to work in UNICEF programmes around the world.

B. Adoption of the provisional agenda, timetable and organization of work

143. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work for the session (E/ICEF/2018/8/Rev.1).

144. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 37 observer delegations, including four international organizations, nine NGOs and 20 UNICEF National Committees.

145. In national statements, Board members recognized the dedication and leadership of the Executive Director in continuing her predecessor's work and in driving forward the organization's mandate. They commended the UNICEF staff for their tireless efforts, often in difficult settings, to leave no child behind.

146. They commended UNICEF for its progress towards ending child marriage, advancing girls' secondary education, promoting gender-responsive adolescent health and addressing gender-based violence in emergencies. They welcomed its collaboration with UNFPA to provide preventive and protection services to girls and women at risk of or affected by female genital mutilation/cutting. They looked forward to the operationalization of gender equality as a cross-cutting priority in the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the implementation of the Gender Action Plan 2018–2021.

147. Delegations welcomed that the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 was built upon the successes of the previous plan and was aligned with the United Nations reform. Noting the importance of predictable, long-term, flexible funding for UNICEF to fulfil its mandate, several delegations pledged multi-year contributions to core resources and encouraged others in a position to do so to do the same. They urged Member States to contribute to the voluntary trust fund for the resident coordinator and to accept the 1 per cent coordination fee on earmarked funding.

148. Delegations were pleased that the humanitarian-development nexus was a top priority in the new plan. UNICEF had a critical role to play in assisting children and refugees in humanitarian settings; its dual mandate made it central to ensuring that United Nations organizations worked together to plant the seeds of development in humanitarian planning and implementation. They appreciated the progress on education indicators and that millions of children were able to access formal and non-formal education in crisis situations. UNICEF had significantly contributed to humanitarian aid reform to balance humanitarian and development work, the two pillars of fundamental human rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. They welcomed the priority on building resilience to sustain and scale up hard-won gains, and encouraged UNICEF to fulfil its commitments made at the World Humanitarian Summit. They expressed appreciation for the role of UNICEF in monitoring and reporting on children in armed conflict.

149. Many delegations expressed strong support for safeguarding the rights of the child as crucial for sustainable development, and expected UNICEF to show unwavering support to the fulfilment of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That included strengthening its normative work; a rights-based approach; and increased attention to gender equality, sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, children with disabilities, minority children and violence against children in all forms. They appreciated the organization's achievements in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, as outlined in the annual report on the Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017. They looked forward to working with

UNICEF in applying its human rights-based approach to development, including through the Group of Friends of Children and the Sustainable Development Goals, and urged UNICEF to continue to mainstream gender in all programming.

150. A number of delegations welcomed the Young People's Agenda and its focus on and investment in opportunities for adolescents, especially through education, training and support and the use of relevant new technologies. Delegations encouraged collaboration on the Agenda with other United Nations entities

151. Delegations also welcomed the strong focus on innovation in the new Strategic Plan and the commitment to scale up new technologies. They also welcomed the organization's active participation in the United Nations Innovation Network, and stressed the importance of United Nations system organizations working closely in a coherent way to capitalize on innovations.

152. Groups of delegations highlighted their special needs and underscored the importance of a universal UNICEF presence, including through multi-country offices, to address national goals and priorities relating to children in middle-income countries, landlocked countries, least developed countries, small island developing States, including in the Pacific, and countries in conflict. They called on UNICEF to continue to work with those countries and promote innovative means of participation that took into account national challenges.

153. The representative of SOS Children's Villages International stressed that institutional care was harmful to children. Some Member States, working on alternative care through partnerships with UNICEF and NGOs, were seeking to progressively phase out institutions. The representative called on UNICEF to continue its commitments to children and young people in the alternative care system and welcomed the inclusion in the Strategic Plan of an indicator calling for national adaptation of the 2009 guidelines for the alternative care of children.

154. The representative of the NGO Committee on UNICEF welcomed the focus on promoting the rights of children who were furthest behind. The complexity of the humanitarian and development situations required a strong coordinated response to protect child rights. It was crucial to ensure that child rights received the attention, funding, focus and political commitment they deserved. Looking forward to the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the committee was committed to providing feedback and contributing to its implementation.

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit

155. The President introduced the annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director (E/ICEF/2018/9), accompanied by the addendum on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/9/Add.1); the UNICEF implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2017 (UNICEF/2018/EB/7); and the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2018/11).

156. After introductory remarks on the annual report by the Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, the Director of the Division of Data, Research and Policy presented details on results achieved in 2017.

157. Board members welcomed the annual report and UNICEF progress against the outcome areas of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, and commended the leadership of the Executive Director and the work of UNICEF staff globally, often in challenging environments. They drew attention to its achievements in child protection and rights, such as the decline in child marriage and improved access to health care, basic sanitation and education, especially in humanitarian settings, as well in providing learning and working opportunities for youth and ensuring their participation in politics and society.

158. Delegations underscored the importance of viable, long-term solutions that were focused on building national and local capacities and systems to address the needs of local populations. Noticing that UNICEF had not consistently met its output targets for capacity development, they urged it to step up efforts to support countries in devising the right policies for children and youth, and to advocate for such policies.

159. A number of delegations expressed the strong support for the United Nations reform agenda as embodied in resolution 72/279 and resolution 71/243 on the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system. The achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development demanded a system-wide focus on promoting the rights of children worldwide, ensuring that their needs were met and empowering them to harness their full potential. They expected the United Nations development organizations to proactively engage with and provide strong support to the Secretary-General in fully implementing reforms. They welcomed the important role of UNICEF in the United Nations development system, and expected it to play a key role in implementing reforms that brought greater coherence to the Organization's response to development challenges at the country level.

160. Several delegations urged UNICEF to proactively implement resolution 72/279 at all levels. It should focus its activities on its comparative advantages, including the coordination of relevant joint initiatives with other United Nations organizations and partners, to deliver on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) under the leadership of the resident coordinator. They stressed their commitment to transforming the United Nations development system so that it could deliver the most effective, integrated development assistance at the country level to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

161. A group of delegations encouraged UNICEF to continue to focus on leaving no one behind, mainstreaming gender equality and creating coherence between humanitarian and development interventions. UNICEF should work with the other United Nations development organizations to: (a) globally align the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 with resolution 72/279; (b) make available in full its contributions to the expanded cost-sharing mechanism to fund the reinvigorated resident coordinator system; (c) constructively work with the other United Nations organizations on a system-wide strategic document that clearly stipulated their comparative and collaborative advantages and specify how the system as a whole was more than its parts; (d) review at the country level the implications of the new setup for the organization and report to the Board on how it would impact the UNICEF business model and its delivery; and (e) move towards common premises and common business operations as quickly as possible.

162. Delegations were pleased with the efficiency gains in 2017 and encouraged UNICEF to continue to increase its organizational efficiency and the quantity and quality of evaluations. They stressed the importance of assessing and improving the effectiveness and efficiency of oversight, including steps to make Board discussions more substantive, interactive and efficient. They encouraged reporting geared towards facilitating dialogue and ensuring Board guidance and oversight. It was crucial for

Member States to be able to demonstrate the impact of UNICEF. Reporting should include discussions on challenges for and within UNICEF, lessons learned and proposals for the way forward.

163. Delegations underscored the importance of predictable, flexible, multi-year funding in order for UNICEF to fulfil its mandate, implement the Goals and leave no child behind. They acknowledged UNICEF efforts to explore financing partnerships, in particular with the private sector, and the work of the National Committees in mobilizing public and private funds. Other delegations highlighted the potential of the UNICEF Innovation Fund to advance the implementation of the Goals through innovative technology and financing.

164. Underlining the importance of lessons learned, delegations stressed that the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 had to be implemented holistically through the strengthening of multi-, cross-sectoral approaches and engagement with the private sector in achieving the Goals for children; the realization of the humanitarian-development-peace nexus to prevent future humanitarian crises; and a deepening collaboration with the other United Nations development organizations through, for example, the common chapter of the strategic plans. They welcomed the inclusion in the UNICEF Strategic Plan of the aim to protect the rights of children with disabilities.

165. The Chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF drew attention to the importance of private sector partnerships and contributions to core resources. Private sector partnerships could help to accelerate positive results for children through coordination, scaling up best practices, sharpening strategies and using the comparative advantages of UNICEF to build a stronger organization. In 2017, the National Committees were responsible for approximately 84 per cent of UNICEF private sector resources, and were the largest source of flexible funding.

166. The representative of ChildFund Alliance underscored the importance of resources in ensuring that policies and interventions for child protection were implemented. The global costs and economic impact of violence against children were estimated to be as high as $7 trillion, while the reported average investment to tackle the issue was less than $0.65 per child. The alliance welcomed the increase in the UNICEF child protection-related expenditures, and called for its continuation. Child-focused partnerships and collaborative initiatives were also critical for strengthening cooperation.

167. The representative of World Vision highlighted its work with UNICEF in humanitarian settings on health, nutrition, sanitation, hygiene, HIV/AIDS, child protection and ending violence against children, and its collaboration with the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children. The representative stressed that ending violence against children demanded collective action and mobilization

168. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/7 (see annex II).

B. Update on strengthening protections (a) against sexual exploitation and abuse and (b) against workplace sexual harassment

169. The President introduced the update.

170. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the Director of the Programme Division provided an update on strengthening protections against sexual exploitation and abuse, followed by the Director of Human Resources, who presented an update on strengthening protections against workplace sexual harassment.

171. Board members stressed their staunch commitment to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in all its forms in UNICEF and throughout the United Nations system. They welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General to combat such violations and of the United Nations system to implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and sexual abuse and workplace sexual harassment.

172. A group of delegations condemned sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and welcomed the steps that UNICEF and other United Nations organizations had taken, including the zero-tolerance policy, while calling on the organizations to do more. Sexual exploitation and abuse undermined the ability of international development actors to work effectively. Organizations that did not protect their own staff from sexual harassment and abuse of power could not protect their beneficiaries, and put at risk the delivery of the 2030 Agenda. They welcomed the cooperation of UNICEF with the Victims Advocate for the United Nations by undertaking an independent review of its policies and processes, appointing a senior-level champion, developing community-based reporting mechanisms, strengthening human resources procedures and increasing resources for investigations.

173. The same group called on UNICEF and the other organizations to implement institutional and cultural change through a system-wide, coherent United Nations approach, and expected them to: (a) address the underlying culture driving unacceptable behaviours, promote gender equality and increase the number of women employed throughout the United Nations system; (b) set up proper, impartial, harmonized mechanisms and procedures to allow for complaints, reporting, investigation and accountability; (c) encourage reporting to uncover cases and protect whistle-blowers; (d) remove barriers to people coming out and provide victims and survivors with support and protection; (e) pursue a comprehensive approach; (f) ensure a coherent system-wide approach in which affiliated organizations, suppliers and implementers abided by the same principles, and perpetrators could not circulate from job to job; and (g) guarantee open, transparent communication with beneficiaries, staff, partners and Member States.

174. Echoing the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/72/751 and Corr.1), they required that, effective January 2018, the senior United Nations leadership system-wide submit annual certifications to their governing bodies confirming that they had fully and accurately reported and taken appropriate actions on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. The group requested that each organization present its certification to its Executive Board at their annual sessions, covering all aspects of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and complementing existing reporting though the Ethic Office, the Office of Audit and Investigations and Evaluation Office.

175. A delegation suggested that, to avoid duplication, the organizations report to their Executive Boards on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF and UN-Women. The same delegation underscored the importance of adhering to the established terminology of General Assembly resolutions for these issues.

176. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/8 (see annex II).

C. Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action

177. The President introduced the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2018/10).

178. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programme, the Director of the Office of Emergency Programmes provided a summary of the annual

report, including a video on the response of UNICEF and partners to the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

179. Board members stressed that UNICEF was a critical partner in humanitarian action and a key player in the humanitarian system. The report was an important step in facilitating strategic discussion between Board members and the UNICEF leadership on humanitarian action.

180. A group of delegations, noting that in 2017, 55 per cent of the organization's country-level expenses were directed towards supporting emergency response, underscored the vital importance of accountability and transparency of expenditure. They commended UNICEF for its analytical overview of results, challenges and lessons and its vision for future programming decisions. They appreciated its plans to address challenges in a systematic, structured way, and commended its focus on reaching the most vulnerable. They sought details on the ways in which UNICEF targeted vulnerable groups in humanitarian action and encouraged it to continue to protect the rights of vulnerable children, including adolescents and children with disabilities. Beyond oversight, the group sought continuous dialogue on humanitarian action, including between Board sessions. They encouraged UNICEF to reflect upon ways to improve the reporting of its experience in humanitarian situations, including more explicitly addressing the specific reporting year in question and specifying next steps for the year to come. Future annual reports should also include clearer references to lessons learned from the synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016.

181. The same group sought deeper engagement on the organization's role in system-wide initiatives and the broader humanitarian system, including the World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain commitments. They requested details on actions to: (a) meet commitments to global humanitarian reform; (b) become effective, efficient and fit-for-purpose in humanitarian action, including through better cooperation and coordination with other humanitarian donors; (c) help build the capacity of local actors; and (d) demonstrate leadership. They stressed that, as a dual-mandate agency, UNICEF had to be a front runner in showcasing efforts to operationalize the nexus between humanitarian action and development programming to reduce vulnerability, build resilience and promote rapid recovery and transition. That included strengthening coherence, promoting joint planning and programming, promoting respect for humanitarian principles and working on collective outcomes across the United Nations system.

182. Delegations sought details on (a) the plans to develop an institutional access framework; (b) the exchange of best practices with other humanitarian actors; (c) the ways in which the new human resource strategy would affect crisis contexts; and (d) opportunities to engage in joint initiatives, such as joint audits and the harmonization of due diligence mechanisms. There was a request for more forward-looking analyses of the role of UNICEF in humanitarian action, including how it would build upon its comparative advantages, the current challenges, its coordination and partnerships with other actors and the lessons learned in recent years, and the ways in which those analyses would inform future planning decisions. They also sought details on the tangible results from efforts in joint needs assessments and the reduction of duplication and management costs.

183. Other delegations requested information on the organization's growing emergency appeals; the operationalization of gender-responsive approaches; partnerships and coordination on gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian settings; the use of cash transfers; the status of the Core Commitments to Children in Humanitarian Action; the fit-for-purpose status of the

organization's financial architecture regarding response to emergencies; and the impact of United Nations reform on UNICEF humanitarian work.

184. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/9 (see annex II).

D. Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017

185. The President introduced the annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/12).

186. After introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Programmes, the Principal Adviser, Gender and Development, provided an update on UNICEF progress against the plan.

187. A group of delegations welcomed the balanced reporting on results and challenges and the achievements in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, especially in the four targeted priority areas. They noted the valuable contribution of UNICEF to ending such harmful practices as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation/cutting, and to reducing adolescent pregnancy, anaemia and gender-based violence, specifically in school settings and humanitarian situations.

188. The group commended UNICEF for strengthening its institutional capacity and mainstreaming gender equality, including by increasing the number of gender specialists, identifying gender focal points, training staff and implementing assistance and tools, such as GenderPro, the gender focal point capacity programme. They encouraged UNICEF to continue to accelerate progress in gender mainstreaming under the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, including making progress towards achieving the commitments under the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women to allocate 15 per cent of total resources towards gender equality.

189. The group encouraged UNICEF to refine its understanding of gender mainstreaming and invited it to elaborate on how gender mainstreaming worked corporately and throughout programming, including, for example, the different implications for girls and boys of actions planned in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 2017/9. The information provided should include details on the ways in which improvements in gender-based analysis, capacity building, resourcing and results tracking had empowered and shaped country programmes for transformative impact. They invited UNICEF to provide details on how it intended to work with women and girls with disabilities across its gender priority areas.

190. Overall, the group encouraged more analytical, strategic reporting that provided compelling evidence of results and demonstrated, through well-defined indicators, the ways in which UNICEF was closing gender gaps, including around discriminatory norms and practices. They recommended the establishment of targets for performance benchmarks to track progress, and pointed to the need for stronger data in humanitarian contexts.

191. The group noted that despite being at the end of the cycle, the report focused on output, including service delivery, awareness raising and capacity building, rather than outcome results. There was little evidence of transformational change, practices, policies or efficiencies arising out of UNICEF programming. UNICEF should continue to improve its application of results-based management to ensure an appropriate level of reporting, building on lessons learned from previous years, and taking the opportunity to showcase its unique and collaborative achievements in partnership with key stakeholders.

192. Other delegations sought details on barriers to meeting targets and steps to alleviate them; difficulties ensuring gender expertise at the country level; economic dividends for gender equality certification; plans to address the lack of financing options; national capacities to deal with issues surrounding adolescent girls; building a stronger gender-sensitive information management system; the degree to which gender inclusiveness included gender identity and diversity; the work of the Gender Action Plan Steering Committee to provide oversight; improving national sex and age disaggregated data; interagency collaboration on gender equality; the role of women's rights organizations in efforts to advance gender equality; and the impact of resolution 72/279 on interagency coordination on gender.

E. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Country programme documents

193. The President informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with decision 2014/1, country programme documents would be considered and approved at the current session on a no-objection basis. Drafts of the country programme documents for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda had been posted on the Executive Board website, along with the respective costed evaluation plans, from 16 March to 5 April 2018 in order to give Board members an opportunity to comment. The comments received had been shared with the respective country and regional offices and Governments and taken into account, as appropriate, in the final versions of the documents. Further discussion was to be held only if at least five members of the Board had informed the secretariat in writing that they wished to bring a country programme before the Board for further discussion. The secretariat had received no such requests.

Eastern and Southern Africa

194. The Regional Director presented the country programmes for Kenya (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.4), Malawi (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.5) and Rwanda (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.6). The programme in Kenya was aimed at reducing stunting and mortality; improving early learning and education; enhancing child and adolescent protection and the primary prevention of HIV; and improving social protection, inclusion and community resilience. In Malawi, the programme was aimed at improving early childhood development, care and learning; ensuring that school-aged girls and boys achieved essential learning outcomes and skills for life, were safe from exploitation, harmful practices and violence and benefitted from integrated social services; and ensuring that girls and boys grew up in resilient, inclusive and child-friendly communities. In Rwanda, the programme was aimed at reducing child mortality and improving child health by strengthening health systems; improving quality education and inclusive learning opportunities; enhancing child protection, especially by reducing violence and improving the family reintegration of children in institutions, including those with disabilities; and expanding the access of disadvantaged families to integrated, well-resourced social protection interventions.

195. The representative of Kenya recognized the partnerships and collaboration with UNICEF and their positive impact on children in Kenya. UNICEF was uniquely positioned to support the country programme priority areas, particularly on food security, nutrition and universal health coverage. Kenya appreciated the continued UNICEF support in strengthening national monitoring systems, including for major surveys, such as the 2019 census, which incorporated child-related and gender-disaggregated indicators. Kenya looked forward to continued collaboration to ensure that gains for children were safeguarded, and called on UNICEF to ensure that the risks identified in the country programme were mitigated, including through increased donor support.

196. The representative of Malawi underscored that the partnership with UNICEF would change the trajectory of the country's future. UNICEF would work with the Government to invest in improving early childhood development, care and learning so that that school-aged girls and boys achieved essential learning outcomes and skills and grew up in resilient, inclusive and child-friendly communities. Malawi hoped that extending the country programme to cover all 28 districts and enhancing its institutional capacity would help to implement the 2030 Agenda.

197. The representative of Rwanda expressed appreciation for the UNICEF country programme as a guiding framework that responded to the five key priorities under the second pillar of the Rwanda National Strategy for Transformation, 2017–2024. The programme formed an integral part of the overall "One United Nations" coordinated presence in Rwanda. The programme was ambitious in comparison with the allocated budget and Rwanda welcomed UNICEF efforts to leverage domestic and international resources and partnership for children. It encouraged UNICEF to support the Government s efforts to mobilize public and private funding through blended finance approaches.

198. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/5 (see annex II).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

199. The President stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congo, Cuba, Mexico and Sierra Leone, as approved by the Executive Director. The Board had also been requested to approve the proposed one-year extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, following a previous one-year extension. Those proposals were presented in document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.7.

200. The Executive Board took note of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congo, Cuba, Mexico and Sierra Leone, as approved by the Executive Director and reflected in decision 2018/6 (see annex II).

201. The Executive Board approved the one-year extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, as reflected in decision 2018/6 (see annex II).

F. Evaluation reports and management responses

202. The President introduced the annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/15) and the related management response (UNICEF/2018/EB/5) and the evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age (E/ICEF/2018/16 (executive summary) and the related management response (E/ICEF/2018/17).

203. The Director of the Evaluation Office presented the two reports, following which the Deputy Executive Director, Management, provided the management responses.

Annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF, and management response

204. In the sole intervention of the Executive Board on the report, a group of delegations recognized that the report's scope included a summary of various reviews and reports in addition to the annual assessment of performance, and stressed that an independent evaluation function was essential to UNICEF. They appreciated the organization's willingness to implement the recommendations of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the United National Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review, its

focus on increasing the quality of evaluations and the inclusion of a management response.

205. On evaluation function performance, the group welcomed the efforts of UNICEF to consider the recommendations set out in Board decision 2017/9, in particular the improvement of geographical coverage and the incorporation of cross-cutting themes. However, they called on UNICEF to ensure that the issue of gender equality was considered in all evaluations and to increase the rate of evaluations having humanitarian action as a cross-cutting theme to bring it more in line with the spending of UNICEF in crisis settings. They requested that the organization provide the Board with concrete steps as to the ways in which it intended to reach those targets. The Director of the Evaluation Office agreed that an expanded approach to the inclusion of gender equality was important. While noting the independent assessment system already being used to provide feedback on gender equality to those conducting evaluations, he also reported that the Office was considering instituting a capacity-building programme to increase the skills of staff in the area of evaluation.

206. The group also requested the better alignment of the number of evaluations submitted per region with the respective direct programme expenses of each region to ensure adequate evaluation coverage in regions with high UNICEF spending.

207. On the thematic distribution of evaluations for the period 2018–2021 compared with the period 2014–2017, the group sought details on the decrease of sector-specific evaluations on education and child protection and requested that UNICEF takes steps to ensure the stable, balanced coverage of evaluations across sectors. They expected future reports to be structured around the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and the revised evaluation policy. They looked forward to details on the ways in which UNICEF would execute the policy, particularly regarding evaluation planning, standards, implementation and evaluation capacity building.

208. On resource allocation, the group expressed ongoing concern that UNICEF had not met its target of allocating 1 per cent of total programme expenditure to evaluation. They highlighted that, at the annual session of 2017, the Board had expressed its concern and requested UNICEF to present a plan for reaching that target. While recognizing the establishment of the pooled fund in the revised evaluation policy was part of that plan and that the results framework of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 included the target, they emphasized the importance of ensuring that the target was met. The Deputy Executive Director noted that the further professionalization of the evaluation function within UNICEF would help to bring understanding to UNICEF staff of the purpose of evaluations as well as how to carry them out, both of which would help to promote the undertaking of evaluations. Such measures were part of the allocation of more resources to evaluation, as was the establishment of the pooled fund as a catalytic mechanism.

209. The group welcomed the active engagement of UNICEF in the independent system-wide evaluation and its participation in UNEG. They encouraged the Evaluation Office to continue its engagement with partners, including through joint evaluations of the UNDAF and joint programmes. They reiterated the importance of conducting joint evaluations, including among UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women, around the common chapter of their strategic plans. They sought details on plans for joint country portfolio evaluations, and requested information on the status of the coordination agreement with UNEG. The Director of the Evaluation Office explained ongoing discussions by UNEG to strengthen UNDAF evaluations, and with United Nations entities with whom UNICEF has joint programmes to expand the coverage of joint programme evaluations.

210. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/10 (see annex II).

Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age, and management response

211. One delegation expressed appreciation for the ongoing focus of UNICEF on nutrition-specific, nutrition-sensitive and cross-sectoral approaches to reducing the burden of malnutrition on women, adolescents and children. In particular, the delegation welcomed efforts to increase knowledge generation on the determinants of stunting and interventions for stunting reduction, and stressed the importance of looking at stunting within a life-cycle approach, as part of the new nutrition strategy.

212. The delegation appreciated that the evaluation addressed gender inequality, but felt that coverage of the topic could be strengthened in future reports. It welcomed the commitment to develop guidelines and manuals to improve the integration of human rights and gender equality perspectives in evaluations, but stressed that the guidelines should also assess the impact on programming of undertaking a comprehensive gender-based analysis. The organization's overall approach to stunting prevention and reduction would be strengthened by a more rigorous approach to analysing the gender determinants of malnutrition and stunting. Such rigorous analysis would be essential for transformative nutrition programming.

213. The delegation stressed the importance of UNICEF leadership within efforts to reduce stunting at the national and international levels, and encouraged it to expand its engagement with other United Nations organizations, such as UNFPA and UN-Women. There was also a call for the Fund to work more closely with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on the issue.

214. One delegation requested details on UNICEF plans to engage Member States in efforts to reduce stunting and to address the lack of education on nutrition-sensitive approaches. The Director, Programme Division, responded that technical staff from Member States would be included in the external reference group. He confirmed that programming on nutrition-sensitive education would be examined in the strategy, along with such issues as the links between nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene and other sectors.

215. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/10 (see annex II).

G. Revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

216. The President introduced the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/14).

217. Following introductory remarks by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the Director of the Evaluation Office presented the report.

218. A group of delegations welcomed the revised evaluation policy and its improvements, and expressed appreciation for the frank discussions with Board members throughout the revision process. The group addressed four main points: resource allocation targets; the independence of the Evaluation Office; national evaluation capacity development; and system-wide evaluation and partnerships.

219. On the resource allocation targets, the group highlighted that the new evaluation policy had set a clear target of 1 per cent of overall programme expenditure to evaluation function. They strongly supported that target as crucial for strengthening the UNICEF evaluation function and protecting it in times of resource fluctuation. The Board would closely monitor that UNICEF reached that target and would revisit the issue at the annual session of 2019.

220. The group valued the independence of the Evaluation Office, and stated that the selection of its Director should happen in consultation with the Executive Director. They supported the direct reporting of the Director of the Evaluation Office to the Executive Director and to the Executive Board. The policy provided the key instrument for the office to operate in full discretion and control over allocated resources.

221. The group of delegations underscored that developing the evaluation capacity of Governments and local partners was paramount to building the national ownership and leadership of development processes. They welcomed the UNICEF commitment to the policy and proposed actions, and called for a common approach with other United Nations organizations and development banks to avoid duplication. They requested that UNICEF present details on its experiences in that regard at the upcoming Board sessions.

222. The group welcomed the inclusion in the revised policy of evaluation functions in the United Nations development system and the UNICEF participation in system-wide evaluations, including for the common chapter of the strategic plans. They stressed that independent system-wide evaluations were of utmost importance for measuring the common objectives laid out in the 2030 Agenda, which demanded enhanced coordination among organizations' evaluation functions. UNICEF played a unique role in system-wide evaluations by leading on the child-related Goals at the country level.

223. The delegations encouraged UNICEF to ensure the sound implementation of evaluation policy principles throughout its work. They called for better evaluation coverage of such cross-cutting issues as gender equality and humanitarian action and strengthened decentralized evaluations to support learning and accountability. They looked forward to the independent review of the policy in 2022.

224. Two delegations asked about plans to enhance evaluation capacity at the local level. The Director of the Evaluation Office responded that the new policy laid the foundation for capacity-building work to grow, especially through collaboration with partners.

225. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/10 (see annex II).

H. Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017

226. The Principal Adviser, Ethics, presented the report of the Ethics Office for 2017 (E/ICEF/2018/13).

227. A group of delegations highlighted the important contribution of the Ethics Office to upholding the highest standards of ethics, integrity and accountability within UNICEF. Its training and outreach to staff raised awareness of UNICEF standards and values and increased coverage. The growing number of requests was the result of the Office's effective initiatives. They acknowledged its growing workload and requested UNICEF to allocate adequate resources so it could fulfil its function and provide advice and support to staff and non-staff personnel. They requested that UNICEF and the Office produce a joint assessment of the level of resources provided to the Office.

228. The group encouraged the Ethics Office, in its annual report, to draw conclusions and make recommendations to UNICEF and the Executive Board, and asked UNICEF to provide a separate management response to the annual report of the Ethics Office, starting in 2019. They renewed their 2017 request for management to involve the Office in matters of standard-setting and policy support, which would clearly define roles, responsibilities and processes for the involvement of the Office. They requested that the policy be presented in the annual report of the Ethics Office in 2019.

229. The group welcomed the actions taken to address sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including the creation of an interim post focused on sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and child safeguarding. They welcomed the support of the Ethics Office for the operationalization of the child safeguarding policy and requested that it present information on progress, challenges and recommendations in its annual report in 2019. The Office had a role to play in establishing responsibilities and processes within UNICEF to prevent and fight abuse, exploitation, harassment and other misconduct. They looked forward to the results of the Independent Task Force on workplace gender discrimination and harassment, and asked that the Task Force include in its report analysis and the elaboration of roles and responsibilities within UNICEF for the prevention and tackling of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. The analysis should include the assignment of responsibilities for implementing actions on sexual misconduct and child safeguarding, many of which were outlined in the Office of Internal Audit and Investigation's 2017 annual report. They called on the Ethics Office to continue its proactive approach and to take responsibility for protection against sexual exploitation and abuse within UNICEF according to its mandate. They stressed the importance of creating conditions that fostered a speak-up culture, and welcomed the efforts of UNICEF and the Ethics Office to increase trust among staff.

I. Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board, and management response

UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2017 annual report

230. The President introduced the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.2 and Corr.1) and the related management response (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.3). Also before the Board, for its information, was the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2017 annual report.

231. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, presented the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board, which the Deputy Executive Director, Management, followed with the presentation of the management response. The Vice-Chair of the UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee provided comments from the Committee's perspective.

232. A group of delegations welcomed the Office's analysis of the effectiveness of the organization's governance, risk management and control frameworks as "generally satisfactory". They welcomed management's commitment to address areas in need of strengthening, including risk management, the management of implementing partners and fraud risk management and safeguarding. They appreciated the follow-up actions to address Board concerns about continuous risk areas identified in the annual report of the Office for 2016, and welcomed the detailed status given in the management response. They commended UNICEF for its efforts to reduce the number of recommendations outstanding for more than 18 months, and asked that it give priority to the remaining recommendations, including those dating to 2013 and 2015.

233. The group acknowledged that the Office's heightened focus on risk-prone areas and offices in response to complex humanitarian situations explained its 2017 ratings, and requested analysis on the reasons for the absence of "adverse" internal audit reports in 2017, the decrease in the overall number of reports rated "satisfactory" and the increase in reports rated "strongly qualified".

234. They encouraged the Office to include reporting against a full set of key performance indicators in its annual report for 2018, and welcomed its plans to undertake an external quality assessment of the audit function. They encouraged the

Office to include a summary of findings of the assessment and progress in implementing its recommendations in the 2018 report. The Director, Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, confirmed that the Office was working internally on developing such indicators, and that the Office leadership would look forward to presenting the results of the external quality-assurance exercise to the Executive Board next year.

235. The group welcomed the implementation of the new anti-fraud strategy and the initiatives to strengthen the control of third parties to minimize losses. They expressed continued concern with the low level of reported recoveries, and urged UNICEF to focus on strengthening recovery processes and reporting to the Board on the recovery of losses, in particular the degree to which losses sustained in one year were recovered in subsequent years. The Deputy Director, Division of Financial and Administrative Management, noted that the new anti-fraud strategy signalled management's greater focus on the issue. The Director and the Deputy Director both suggested that reports of fraud and misconduct might rise in the short term, because of increased awareness throughout the organization, and not necessarily because of an increase in cases.

236. The group requested the inclusion in the 2018 report of an analysis of the channels through which allegations of fraud and misconduct were detected or reported. The Director noted that management was putting great effort into improving reporting channels and encouraging a speak-up culture. To assess whether such efforts had been effective, the Office planned to provide an update later in the year on any changes detected in the patterns of allegations raised.

237. The group also urged UNICEF to ensure that the harmonized approach to cash transfers was understood and implemented in a qualitative manner.

238. The group expressed appreciation for the Executive Director's clear stance on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and the broad analysis in the management response of actions taken. They welcomed the Office's plans for 2018 to embed and mainstream a coherent, effective approach to child protection and safeguarding throughout UNICEF, and requested that, in its assessment and assurance, the Office make specific recommendations to improve the UNICEF approach and policies on sexual exploitation and abuse, including by measuring progress against key performance indicators. They asked UNICEF to distinguish between sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in developing programmes, policies and reports, and sought more in-depth analysis of both in future annual audit reports.

239. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/12 (see annex II).

J. Report of the field visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti by members of the Executive Board, 14–24 March 2018

240. The report of the field visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti (UNICEF/2018/EB/6) was introduced by the Director, Office of Maternal and Child Health and Nutrition, Bureau for Global Health, United States Agency for International Development.

241. The delegation had gained first-hand understanding of UNICEF work at the country level, and saw examples of cooperation with the host Governments and other partners, including the country teams. The visit enabled delegations to understand the issues regarding children and women and the challenges they faced in the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

242. The delegation commended the UNICEF country teams in both countries for their achievements in complex contexts, their close working relationships with the

host Governments and their ability to balance both the need to work through NGOs and the goal of strengthening the host Government's capacity by channelling funds through government structures.

243. They were pleased with the cooperation between UNICEF and government institutions in developing norms and standards in the formulation of policies affecting children, as well the organization's focus on its comparative advantage in providing strategic policy advice for national programmes. They appreciated the clear focus on the most vulnerable population groups and the most disadvantaged geographical areas.

244. The delegation noted the importance of UNICEF efforts to strengthen the disaggregation of data to reveal social disparities as a basis for advocacy and programme planning. They welcomed the organization's efforts to influence policies, legislation and public spending towards the most disadvantaged. The delegation noted the importance of maintaining a minimum level of core programme resources to sustain the UNICEF capacity to provide high-level technical advice and to influence policies.

245. UNICEF engagement with partners, civil society, communities, and faith-based organizations in the private sector was a good example of the added value and the multiplier effect it could have as a catalyst to bring partners together. The delegation noted the cooperation within the country teams of the various United Nations entities reflected in the large number of joint programmes. The delegation commended UNICEF for partnerships established at all levels with ministries and local authorities to achieve results through evidenced-based advocacy and action. It was pleased to observe how the country programmes worked on issues that transcended borders.

246. The representative of the Dominican Republic underscored the importance of the work of UNICEF in her country to strengthen national capacities to achieve the Goals. She drew attention the programmes developed for the well-being of children and adolescents in education, health care, services to reduce mother and child mortality, sexual exploitation and issues related to child pornography. She highlighted the success of a project on technology and crime that had had major success in eliminating pornography distribution centres. Also key was the launching of a study on social investment as part of efforts to provide quantitative information, monitor investment levels and measure transparency, fairness and efficiency. The new country programme would make a major contribution to enhancing public policy in promoting and protecting the rights of children and adolescents, including through budget planning and data collection.

247. The Permanent Representative of Antigua and Barbuda highlighted that UNICEF had played a crucial role in the response to Hurricane Irma in his nation, and was working with the national authorities to prepare for the next hurricane. They were encouraged by the extensive consultations between UNICEF and the Government in shaping a response to the disaster while at the same time working to make sure no one was left behind at both the national and subregional levels. He underscored the importance of multi-country offices in addressing the needs of small island developing States, which the reinvigoration of the resident coordinator system under resolution 72/279 should address.

248. The representative of Brazil underlined the special needs, challenges and vulnerabilities of the small island developing States. She stressed that UNICEF had a special role to play in bringing out the ethical dimensions of the ways in which field visit findings were portrayed in the media.

249. The representative of Ghana noted the grave difficulties that Haiti is facing, particularly following Hurricane Matthew, and commended UNICEF for its work in the country.

250. The representative of the United States stressed the importance of having a field visit delegation composed of members with diverse skills and specializations who could shed light on different development challenges during the visits.

K. Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association

251. In her address to the Executive Board, the Chairperson of the Global Staff Association highlighted the efforts of UNICEF to address issues raised at the annual session of 2017 and drew attention to ongoing challenges.

252. In response to the 2017 Global Staff Survey, the Global Management Team had identified five priorities that required corporate intervention and had tasked five members to lead in addressing: (a) the gender gap; (b) career development; (c) office efficiency; (d) managerial accountability; and (e) enhancement of the speak-up culture.

253. She highlighted that, in an effort to enhance speak-up culture, UNICEF had launched the Voice Programme, which was aimed at improving the ability of staff to interact freely with each other without hierarchical boundaries and to discuss performance issues and sensitive subjects.

254. The Gender Working Group found that UNICEF was similar to other employers in terms of gender equality in the workplace. It also learned that, while UNICEF was close to gender parity, some sectors remained less gender-balanced than others. Gender equality in the workplace demanded a broader, more inclusive shift in organizational culture to promote equality, reject stereotypes and discrimination and counter privilege. The Task Force had proposed developing a mentorship programme for both women and men, setting up a family-friendly rotation policy and promoting spousal employment.

255. The career and development working group supported the launch of a career development portfolio that included career management workshops, webinars, one-on-one coaching, online chats, a web portal with resources and training for global human resources staff to support staff. A comprehensive career conversation tool kit was under development.

256. The working group on office efficiency and effectiveness had identified several areas to work on: the simplification and streamlining of business processes, the development of a playbook to support offices to monitor and assist the improvement initiatives and a reduction in the number of change initiatives.

257. The working group on managerial accountability had begun working and would make recommendations later in 2018.

258. On sexual harassment and abuse of authority, the Chairperson reported that the Executive Director had taken swift action to underscore the UNICEF commitment to a zero-tolerance policy. Training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment and abuse of authority was mandatory for all staff members and consultants. UNICEF had strengthened reporting and response mechanisms and taken disciplinary action. Management had followed through on its promise to establish an independent task force to review its policies and practices and make recommendations.

259. She highlighted that human resources reforms in 2016 and 2017 had resulted in increased, conscious efforts to engage staff associations on revisions to policies

affecting staff. Positive changes included the implementation of continued appointments, the issuance of longer fixed contracts and the adoption of the title "associate" to replace "assistant". The contractual changes had created job security and raised staff morale.

260. On staff safety and security, the Executive Director had visited a number of emergency duty stations and witnessed the hardships of staff, especially national staff with less support due to limitations in benefits. UNICEF was an active member of the Task Force on Duty of Care established by the High-level Committee on Management, and had committed to implementing the duty-of-care recommendations in coordination with other United Nations organizations.

261. She noted that the recommendations of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) to reduce entitlements and benefits of international professional staff, approved by the General Assembly in 2015, had affected staff morale and raised concerns about attracting and retaining staff. ICSC had also embarked on a review of the compensation package for national staff, for whom the ICSC local salary methodology had had negative consequences. The Global Staff Association had joined other United Nations staff unions and associations in demanding ICSC reforms to its salary methodologies for national and international staff.

262. Turning to United Nations reform, the Chairperson highlighted that the goal to enhance coherence and efficiency raised concerns among staff about potential job losses. The Global Staff Association would engage with management to establish mitigation measures to protect staff from the impact of reforms, and to ensure that decisions affecting staff were fair and transparent.

L. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2018

263. The provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2018 was presented by the Secretary of the Executive Board.

M. Adoption of draft decisions

264. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2018/5, 2018/6, 2018/7, 2018/8, 2018/9, 2018/10, 2018/11 and 2018/12 (see annex II).

N. UNICEF Staff Team Awards and closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

265. The Executive Director announced the winners of the 2018 UNICEF Staff Team Awards, which recognized the efforts of UNICEF staff around the world:

(a) The country office in Yemen had shown remarkable achievement in overcoming the seemingly insurmountable challenges to reach mothers, children and young people desperate for aid and support in an environment defined by internal conflict, political divide, security concerns and threats. In the face of those challenges, staff members were resilient and committed, and forged innovative, collaborative partnerships to support the organization's mission and publicize the growing needs in Yemen;

(b) The Akure field office in Nigeria had displayed outstanding cooperation and coordination in handling an unprecedented and sensitive security situation, in which two UNICEF staff members were ambushed while on official travel. Tragically, one of the colleagues perished in the incident, and the other was held hostage for four days. The office made extraordinary efforts, in collaboration with local authorities and other

partners, secured the perished colleague's remains and enabled the safe return of the second colleague;

(c) The Afghanistan and Pakistan country offices and their polio teams had worked relentlessly to eradicate polio in the face of a global resurgence. The teams mobilized community members to work on the front lines of the polio eradication effort, including many women, ensuring that the vaccination programme reached children in remote areas where conditions, terrain and security challenges were difficult to manage;

(d) The UNICEF Division of Financial and Administrative Management: was recognized for its technical innovation, EZ-HACT (harmonized approach to cash transfers), which had dramatically changed the way in which country offices operated. Developed in conjunction with colleagues in information and communications technology and the Field Results Group, EZ-HACT simplified and streamlined the processing, management and reporting of cash transfers, eliminating several manual steps and reducing the processing time of cash transfers, and making enhanced reporting possible.

266. In closing, the Executive Director reiterated the commitment of UNICEF to work closely with the Board in delivering on the Strategic Plan, improving the working methods of the Board and proactively driving forward United Nations reform, in close cooperation with United Nations development system organizations, as embodied in resolution 72/279.

267. The President underscored the Board's achievements during the session at an opportune moment within the United Nations, with the General Assembly's adoption of resolution 72/279 and its bold plan to reposition the United Nations development system. The Executive Boards of the funds, programmes and specialized agencies were committed to driving the reform forward. He highlighted the main discussions of the UNICEF Board meeting, including the new evaluation policy, which he fully endorsed as setting the stage for a culture that used evaluation for better performance, continuous improvement and strengthened accountability in service to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda. He also noted the report of the field visit to the Dominican Republic and Haiti, which had shown the substantive achievement of UNICEF in those two complex countries, and had once again highlighted the importance of maintaining a sufficient level of core resources, so that UNICEF could continue to implement effective and sustainable programmes. He expressed appreciation for the presentation by the secretariat of its efforts to strengthen protections against sexual exploitation and abuse and against workplace sexual harassment, and he noted the importance of accountability and transparency and the invaluable role played by UNICEF staff across the globe for children.

Part three
Second regular session 2018

Held at United Nations Headquarters from
12 to 14 September 2018

I. Organization of the session

A. Opening statements by the President of the Executive Board and the Executive Director of UNICEF

268. The President opened the session with a reflection that it came at a time of great sorrow within the United Nations community as it mourned the loss of Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations. It was also a time of significant activity and excitement, with the General Debate of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly beginning in less than one week. Numerous high-level and side events had been scheduled around the Assembly that would chart the way forward on critical issues of relevance to children.

269. The President recognized the contributions of the three vice-presidents who had recently left the Bureau of the Executive Board, the Permanent Representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ethiopia and Nepal, and welcomed the new delegates who would replace them on the Bureau. He was grateful for the consultative and inclusive process that had taken place between UNICEF and the members of the Executive Board through the informal briefings held on several of the agenda items.

270. He emphasized that the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, the recent General Assembly resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system and the clear signals received from the Member States and leadership of the United Nations called for UNICEF and its sister agencies to make the necessary adjustments to their policies and guidelines.

271. Throughout the year, in collaboration with the principals and Executive Boards of the UNICEF sister agencies, the President had sought to maintain the momentum on recent efforts to improve the working methods of the Board. The decision on working methods would pave the way for the Board to be more effective and strategic in its deliberations and decision-making, and to be more open and transparent.

272. The organization's focus on children and young people would hopefully gain additional impetus with the launch of a new agenda, Generation Unlimited. Through the partnership, UNICEF wished to co-create and accelerate new programmes to get every young person in school, learning, training or employment by 2030.

273. The President underscored that adequate, flexible, predictable and multi-year funding was key to the effectiveness of UNICEF and the other humanitarian and development actors.

274. In her address, the Executive Director paid tribute to the leadership and commitment of Ambassador Tore Hattrem, Permanent Representative of Norway, during his tenure as President of the Executive Board of UNICEF. She seconded the President's thanks to the departing Vice-Presidents: Ambassador Tekeda Alemu, Permanent Representative of Ethiopia; Ambassador Durga Prasad Bhattarai, Permanent Representative of Nepal; and Ambassador Miloš Vukašinović, Permanent Representative of Bosnia and Herzegovina. She welcomed the new Vice-Presidents who would be taking on the baton.

275. She also thanked departing UNICEF staff members Ms. Shahida Afzar and Ms. Fatoumata Ndiaye and welcomed the incoming Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, Ms. Charlotte Petri Gornitzka.

276. She further expressed thanks to the Board members for their guidance and to UNICEF staff members worldwide.

277. The Executive Director reminded Board members that Universal Children's Day was on 20 November and that 2019 marked the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The milestone would be celebrated with the World Summit for Children on 20 November 2019.

278. The Executive Director underscored that innovation afforded UNICEF the opportunity to move forward. She raised three questions in this regard. First, what kinds of innovations would help us to reach more children and young people in need? Second, how could innovation accelerate our programme results? Third, how could a robust ecosystem of support be established? She encouraged Member States to tap into ideas and innovations and consider whether there were new sources of public and private funding that could be applied to the work of the organization.

279. The Executive Director added that UNICEF was committed to the Secretary-General's efforts to reposition the United Nations development system. She was personally co-chairing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Results Group for Strategic Partnerships and the organization had agreed to double its cost share for 2019 for the new resident coordinator system.

280. She drew attention to the one per cent levy on tightly earmarked development contributions. First, she noted that UNICEF believed that the levy might serve as a disincentive to the private sector, global programme partnerships and international financial institutions. Hence these partners should be exempt from the levy. Second, she pointed out that Member States had opted for the levy "at source". It would therefore be important that the responsibility for collecting this levy be with Member States, not with United Nations agencies. Otherwise, there was a risk to increase United Nations agencies' transaction costs and administrative burden — which was counter to the efficiencies the system was trying to achieve.

281. She also underlined that flexible funding was critical for the United Nations system to be effective at the country level, where it was most needed.

282. The Executive Director stressed her commitment to addressing protection against sexual abuse and exploitation, and workplace discrimination and harassment. An Independent Task Force on workplace discrimination and harassment had convened and their eventual recommendations would be presented to the Board. A follow-up action plan would be swiftly developed and implemented.

283. She reported to the Executive Board that an independent review of the organization's system for handling allegations of sexual abuse and exploitation had been commissioned. The results of the review would be presented to the Board in the 2019 first regular session.

B. Adoption of the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work

284. The Executive Board adopted the provisional annotated agenda, timetable and organization of work for the session (E/ICEF/2018/19).

285. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 36 observer delegations, one intergovernmental organization, one international organization, four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and nine National Committees for UNICEF.

286. In national statements, Board members thanked the President for his leadership of the Executive Board during 2018 and affirmed their commitment to the mission of UNICEF to protect and promote the rights of children across the globe.

287. They appreciated the attention UNICEF was affording to protection against sexual abuse and exploitation and workplace gender discrimination and harassment as well as the organization's commitment to tackling it. They supported the Executive Director's zero-tolerance approach and the efforts that UNICEF was taking to implement it.

288. Members of the Executive Board welcomed the joint response of the Executive Board secretariats of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP) on Executive Boards' working methods. The efforts to harmonize working methods would lead to improved collaboration and coherence, more sharing of best practices between agencies, enhanced efficiency and effectiveness, increased transparency and reduced duplication.

289. Some delegations mentioned resolution 72/279 pertaining to a repositioning of the United Nations development system and appreciated that UNICEF was committed to supporting the Secretary-General in its implementation. They looked forward to further implementation of the resolution.

290. Delegations welcomed the focus that UNICEF was placing on innovation, which would help the organization to better deliver programmes. They appreciated the scaling-up of new technologies and the seeking of innovative solutions. Innovation was central to the development agenda and had a role to play in the future work of UNICEF.

291. Many delegations lauded the upcoming launch of Generation Unlimited, the new global partnership that aimed to get every young person in education, learning, training or employment by 2030. They highlighted that young people should be meaningfully engaged in planning, decision-making and the implementation of programmes. Some delegations called for a special focus on young girls, as they were a particularly vulnerable group.

292. The representative of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF expressed concern about the proposal to add a one per cent levy to tightly earmarked contributions from the private sector, as it would be counterproductive and result in fewer resources.

C. Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2019

293. The President introduced the agenda item on the proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2019 (E/ICEF/2018/20/Rev.1) and gave the floor to the Secretary. The Secretary noted that an updated version of the programme had just been circulated in the conference room. The programme included statutory requirements, took into consideration the requirements of the Board, as indicated in previous decisions, and had been prepared in consultation with the Bureau. The Secretary highlighted the dates of the three formal sessions for 2019.

294. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/13 (see annex II).

D. Working methods

295. The President introduced the joint response of the Executive Board secretariats of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP on Executive Board working methods and thanked the secretariats for their contributions. The document was a response to a request in decision 2018/7, wherein the Board also encouraged

the secretariat to pursue ways in which to improve working methods, generate cost savings and consider the number of yearly field visits.

296. The President reaffirmed that modernizing the Executive Board and improving its working methods was a priority for him during his tenure as President of the Board and welcomed the tabling of a decision on this issue.

297. He noted that the joint response should be considered in the context of recent steps to reposition and harmonize the United Nations development system set out in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review and resolution 72/279 pertaining to a repositioning of the United Nations development system.

298. Delegations thanked the President, the Bureau and the secretariat of the Executive Board for the leadership and commitment shown in working towards improved working methods.

299. Delegations welcomed the introduction of common agenda items across the Executive Boards as well as the development of an online calendar.

300. There was a question about the rationale behind the suggestion to reduce the number of field visits. The importance of carrying out a gradual, well-founded optimization to increase effectiveness and strengthen accountability rather than a mechanical harmonization of the current activities of the Executive Board was underscored. The importance of distributing draft decisions and Member State comments in advance of Board sessions to improve work during the session was also emphasized.

301. During the discussion on working methods, delegations supported the process to improve working methods and welcomed the progress so far. A consultation process in 2019 to explore ways to improve efficiencies, effectiveness and quality in the functions of the Executive Board of UNICEF and the joint meeting of the Executive Boards was welcomed. Delegations further noted that improving working methods to build on good practice and become more efficient and effective and strategic use of the informal consultations and briefings would assist in this effort. One issue raised was the number of Executive Board sessions held on an annual basis. There was a call for more strategic, analytical, dynamic and interactive documents and presentations.

302. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/14 (see annex II).

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

303. The Deputy Executive Director, Partnerships, introduced the report (UNICEF/2018/EB/9), which was followed by a joint presentation by the directors of the Division of Public Partnerships and the Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships.

304. Several delegations announced increases in their regular resources contributions, with one delegation noting their significant increase as a signal to increase core funding in response to the Secretary General's funding compact. It was recommended that UNICEF implement a system to comprehensively track the flow of domestic resources from the public and private sectors and use it as an advocacy tool. The focus on multi-stakeholder partnerships and sustained engagement with the business sector were expected to have high returns. In collaboration with the other funds and programmes, UNICEF was expected to continue to address cross-funding issues. The organization was urged to deepen the collaboration between its country offices and the United Nations system. UNICEF was commended on its indicative provision of

additional funds to meet the cost-sharing requirement outlined in the resolution on the repositioning of the United Nations development system.

305. A group of delegations outlined the improvements that would be welcomed: viewing the dialogue as a tool for Board members to take responsibility for financing the Strategic Plan; engaging donors other than Governments; developing a clear vision, principles and goals and implementing an annual cycle, as presented by UNICEF; providing forward-looking documents that would include information on financial needs, gaps and projections; and covering all funding sources, including improving the quality of earmarked contributions.

306. Delegations asked which results would most need core resources and whether UNICEF had sufficient funds to cover those functions. It was also asked how thematic funding was allocated and if regular resources were used to cover gaps in funding for priority areas; and what could be done to improve transparency and provide donors and the Board with more frequent updates on the results it helped to engender. The delegations offered to support the work to increase resources for thematic pools and enhance reporting.

307. During the discussion one of the issues highlighted was stronger partnerships with the international financing institutions, other global programme partnerships and multi-stakeholder partnerships. UNICEF was expected to be a central actor in the implementation of the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other horizontal pooled and catalytic funds, and to lead by example in promoting joint programming. A question was raised about linkages between the structured dialogue and the new funding compact, and whether an analysis would be done of the possible available resources through the new multi-partner pooled funds and financing instruments.

308. A delegation commended the continued work to diversify the funding base and welcomed the progress made in increasing public- and private-sector and pledge contributions, and efforts made by UNICEF to increase the visibility of results achieved through regular resource funding. Appreciation was expressed for the organization's strong transparency and accountability mechanisms and the critical role it played on the ground, including the lead role in the generation of data and knowledge. UNICEF was expected to demonstrate its effectiveness, efficiency and impact, not only in the use of regular resources but also the use of other resources.

309. Several delegations encouraged UNICEF to work more closely with its sister agencies on private-sector fundraising. In their national statements, several delegations commended UNICEF for its resource mobilization results in 2017, with some delegations expressing appreciation for its efforts to strengthen its financial capacity through structured dialogue.

310. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/15 (see annex II).

B. Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action

311. The President introduced the oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action and the Director, Office of Emergency Programmes, presented the oral update.

312. Delegations appreciated the inclusion of education and its strengthening in emergency programming. The initiative of highlighting girls and children with disabilities was seen as a positive development.

313. During their general statements, delegations noted the importance of humanitarian work, mentioning examples specific to their national contexts. The dual mandate of UNICEF as both a humanitarian and a development organization was recognized as a central element in the organization's key role in the integration of

humanitarian and development work. The involvement of the private sector in humanitarian responses was highlighted as a priority, and there was a call for transparency and accountability around humanitarian issues.

314. Delegations inquired how UNICEF was using local NGOs and service-delivery providers to execute humanitarian actions. The Director confirmed that UNICEF deemed the localization agenda an important element of humanitarian action and noted that two thirds of the organization's partners were local. He mentioned that capacity-building was an important element of working with local organizations and other partners.

315. Delegations asked about the inclusion of refugees in education systems, both as recipients of education and as providers, whereby members of refugee communities would teach children on a voluntary basis. The Director confirmed that UNICEF was committed to including children and that the organization needed to further engage with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on this question. Concerning the engagement of refugees as education providers, he said that there were factors that hindered the employment of members of refugee populations, but that UNICEF was making efforts to involve the community.

316. On terms of funding, delegations asked about the alignment of funds from different initiatives, how these funds were channelled into education programmes and how the education agenda, as part of an emergency response and resources, was properly targeted. The Director stated that funding for education in emergency situations and humanitarian interventions was lacking and thus far there was not a risk for overlap. Individual mechanisms focused on different countries and situations. He confirmed that it was an area that required funding and emphasized that it was an integral part of an emergency response.

317. The Director thanked delegations for their support and engagement regarding education and emergencies more generally.

C. UNICEF programme cooperation

(a) Country programme documents

318. The President informed the Executive Board that, in accordance with decision 2014/1, country programme documents would be considered and approved on a no-objection basis. Delegations had been invited to share their comments on the country and multi-country programme documents (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.8 to E/ICEF/2018/P/L.21 and E/ICEF/2018/P/L.22/Rev.1). The draft documents were posted on the Executive Board website for comment from 19 June to 9 July 2018. The comments received had been shared with the respective countries and regional offices and Governments, and taken into account as appropriate. The final country and multi-country programme documents were made available on the Executive Board website in English six weeks in advance of the session and in the relevant languages four weeks in advance.

319. Current procedures called for further discussion only if at least five members of the Board had informed the secretariat, in writing, of their wish to bring a particular programme to the Executive Board for further discussion. The secretariat had received no such requests, so the country and multi-country programme documents were approved on a no-objection basis.

320. The representative of SOS Children's Villages International congratulated countries on their efforts to improve the lives of vulnerable children with the support of UNICEF and partners from the non-governmental sector. She also acknowledged the improved childcare protection mechanisms and social inclusion interventions, but

noted that more needed to be done, particularly for marginalized groups. She highlighted some recommendations for childcare reform and deinstitutionalization to be successful for every child.

East Asia and the Pacific

321. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Cambodia and the Philippines (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.22/Rev.1 and E/ICEF/2018/P/L.8).

322. The representative of the Philippines expressed the Government's support for the new country programme, which was aligned with the Philippine Development Plan, 2017–2022 and the country's vision for ending poverty as outlined in Ambisyon Natin 2040. The country programme would focus on the country's estimated 12 million poor and vulnerable children, and thus entrenched the imperative of the 2030 Agenda: to leave no one behind.

323. She acknowledged work undertaken with UNICEF to address crises, including online violence against children and protecting children in armed conflict, particularly in Mindanao. She expressed the Government's support for a national study on online sexual exploitation and abuse of children undertaken by UNICEF, and recognized the organization's interventions in helping to disengage child soldiers from armed groups. She noted that the country had made great strides with the enactment of the Bangsamoro Organic Law (2018).

324. The representative of Cambodia said that UNICEF had played an active role in the country's socioeconomic development to improve the lives of millions of women and children. The implementation of the UNICEF country programme for 2016–2018 had produced noteworthy results.

325. It was anticipated that under the new country programme, UNICEF would continue its priority focus on health and nutrition; education; water, sanitation and hygiene; child protection; and public financing for children's development. The programme was aligned with the priorities of the National Strategic Development Plan and the Government's sectoral policies.

326. The representative expressed his sincere appreciation to the donors for their generous financial support to the UNICEF programmes and projects in Cambodia. He thanked the members of the Board for their continued support for the implementation of the new country programme.

Eastern and Southern Africa

327. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Burundi, Lesotho, Namibia and South Sudan (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.9 to E/ICEF/2018/P/L.12).

328. The representative of Lesotho commended UNICEF for the inclusive way in which the country programme had been developed. Against the backdrop of numerous challenges — poverty, high HIV prevalence and youth unemployment and multiple deprivations among youth — the new programme would continue to support children and adolescents and provide them with opportunities to survive, develop and reach their full potential. The programme's three priorities would be delivered through an integrated approach that emphasized, among others, young children's health, nutrition and early learning; strengthening adolescent health, HIV prevention and support, learning and protection; and support for a social policy and social protection environment that would reduce child poverty.

329. The representative of South Sudan acknowledged with appreciation the continued focus of the country programme in responding to humanitarian, health and

education needs, while remaining flexible for implementation within recovery and peace contexts in terms of service delivery, institutional and technical capacity development and systems strengthening. He welcomed the programme's thematic focus on issues such as increasing the use of services for maternal and child health, nutrition and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene, and supported the initiative to increase education and peacebuilding and to reduce young people's exposure to violence. The representative called on development partners to continue to support UNICEF and to collaborate with the Government of South Sudan.

330. A delegation welcomed the flexible approach of the South Sudan country programme, which considered the volatility of the environment and included an acknowledgement of the risks to the achievement of the programme goals. Nonetheless, in the delegation's view, the programme document had not included one of the major risks to working in that context: the unintended consequences of programme activities that could fuel hostilities due to flows of money and other resources. The delegation welcomed the focus on the capacity development of partners, which was linked to resilience-building approaches. While expressing support for the country programme's focus on life-saving interventions, another delegation sought elaboration of how mental health and psychological support interventions were mainstreamed across education, nutrition and child protection interventions. The representative of South Sudan acknowledged the concerns raised by the two delegations, and expressed the hope that, with the signing of the peace agreement, access and security would remain sound and that programme implementation would not be hindered. The Regional Director confirmed that in all country programmes, including South Sudan, the elements of psychosocial support were an integral part of the child protection and education programmes, and increasingly of the health and nutrition programmes.

331. The representative of Namibia reported that the Government's provision of free and universal primary and secondary education had led to increased school enrolment across all school-aged groups. However, failure and dropout rates remained high. With support from UNICEF and other agencies, through the United Nations Partnership Framework 2019–2023, the Government would seek to address the underlying causes. Namibia had also reduced the impact of the HIV epidemic on newborns by implementing guidelines for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission; it was anticipated that rates would further decrease given the Government's ongoing commitment to ending the epidemic. The representative said that the operations of the United Nations in Namibia, which relied on one back office supporting multiple resident and non-resident agencies, were in alignment with efforts to reform the United Nations.

Latin America and Caribbean

332. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Ecuador and Nicaragua (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.13 and E/ICEF/2018/P/L.14).

333. The representative of Ecuador noted that Ecuador was a country of young people; 36 per cent of the population was under 18 years of age. He highlighted the importance of strengthening the relationship with other United Nations agencies. The representative appreciated the involvement of different partners in the development of the document, which aligned with the priorities of the Government. Ecuador welcomed the development and planning of a cooperation programme together with UNICEF as a good example of how to complement and combine efforts for the implementation of the National Development Plan 2017–2021.

334. The representative of Nicaragua expressed his country's commitment to achieving the goals set out in the 2030 Agenda focused on eradicating poverty.

Nicaragua continued to strive to achieve the goals set forth with UNICEF, which were in keeping with the national plan, despite challenges.

335. The Regional Director expressed her gratitude to the representatives of Ecuador and Nicaragua. She took the opportunity to update the Executive Board on the situation in the Caribbean. She described the preparedness steps that UNICEF had taken to respond to Hurricane Isaac, including in child protection.

Middle East and North Africa

336. The Regional Director presented the Gulf subregional programme (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates) and the country programme for Libya (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.15 and E/ICEF/2018/P/L.16).

337. The representative of Libya reported that the previous country programme had been designed for a middle-income country, but the deterioration of the economic situation had prevented the fulfilment of social protection needs and the effective and sustained provision of services. Given those realities, the Government had requested technical assistance from UNICEF so that the country could make progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The country programme document for 2019–2020 thus reflected a strategy that prioritized support for different social services and promoted governance and the rule of law. The programme aimed to attain synergy between humanitarian assistance and the longer-term development programme.

338. The representative of Italy expressed appreciation for the programme's linkages to some of the goals of the General Strategic Framework of the United Nations in Libya, the goals of the humanitarian response plan and the UNICEF partnership with the Italian Development Cooperation in the implementation of the Recovery, Stability and Socioeconomic Development in Libya programme.

339. The representative of Saudi Arabia committed to close cooperation with UNICEF to achieve its strategic plan, which was based on four main priorities: early childhood development; the protection of children; access to data and evidence on children, in cooperation with local authorities and the other countries in the region; and partnerships, commitments and resources for children. The Kingdom was keen to support efforts aimed at children to enable them to enjoy all social, humanitarian, educational and economic rights.

340. The representative of the United Arab Emirates highlighted four elements that would continue to make UNICEF relevant for programming in countries across all income levels. First, the programme had evolved and would continue to evolve with the times, with interventions responding to contemporary concerns. Second, mainstreaming approaches had continued to generate value, even in relatively advanced governance settings. Third, early childhood and development approaches that were under-leveraged could be exploited, with the country's body of work — which supported the UNICEF estimate of high returns for every dollar invested — becoming part of the global evidence base. And lastly, UNICEF was ideally positioned to drive investments in data collection and analysis that could help to accelerate budget allocations to early childhood and development.

341. The representative of Qatar expressed the country's commitment to promoting the rights of children at all levels to an education, especially children living in poverty and suffering the consequences of war, conflict and natural disasters. The cooperation between UNICEF and the Education Above All foundation, which had provided 10 million children with access to high-quality education and prevented them from dropping out of school, was cited as an example of the successful partnership with UNICEF and the Government.

South Asia

342. The Regional Director presented the country programme document for Bhutan (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.17).

343. On behalf of the Bureau of the Executive Board, the President mentioned that members were very impressed with the socioeconomic development that they had witnessed in Bhutan during the 2018 Bureau visit.

344. The representative of Bhutan thanked the President for his positive remarks regarding the Bureau visit to Bhutan and the Regional Director for her comprehensive presentation of the country programme. Bhutan welcomed the country programme document and recognized its importance. She also added that the observations and findings from the field visit by the Bureau of the Executive Board would have further strengthened the document. She lauded the shared commitment of the Royal Government of Bhutan and UNICEF to leave no child behind as well as the dynamism and responsiveness of the UNICEF country programme to adapt to the changing societal needs and priorities of Bhutan. The programme was aligned with the twelfth five-year national plan which foresaw a transition strategy from a least developed country to a lower-middle-income country. The representative closed by reiterating the Government's commitment to implement the country programme.

West and Central Africa

345. The Regional Director presented the country programme documents for Benin, Equatorial Guinea, Senegal and Togo (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.18 to E/ICEF/2018/P/L.21).

346. The representative of Equatorial Guinea commended the work of UNICEF in the country, which was always done in coordination with and in function of goals set by the Government.

347. In this spirit, the country programme was agreed with the Government and was in keeping with the National Economic and Social Development Programme, known as Horizonte 2020, as well as the African Union Agenda 2063. Notably, it would strengthen education and healthcare programmes in districts that had been pre-selected in collaboration with the Government.

348. The representative highlighted the support that UNICEF had provided to the Government in their struggle against epidemics in Equatorial Guinea and the positive results of that support.

349. The representative of Senegal welcomed the partnership between UNICEF and Senegal and noted that the country programme document had been drawn up in cooperation with the Government and with the active participation of all stakeholders.

350. The country programme had been prepared in line with the vision of President Macky Sall through the Plan for an Emerging Senegal (2014–2035) which focused on three axes: bringing about the structural transformation of the economy, promoting human capital, social protection and sustainable development and enabling good governance, institutions, peace and security.

351. The representative welcomed the alignment of programmes of different United Nations agencies within the context of the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The programmes of UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women covered the same period as UNICEF and were the subject of a joint presentation during a meeting with the Government and partners in Dakar. The programmes were linked through the common chapter of their strategic plans and possible areas of cooperation had been identified. He believed that this practice should be duplicated.

352. The representative of Togo noted that the country programme was aligned with the national priorities set out in the National Development Plan, 2018–2022 and that it had been prepared in an inclusive and participative manner with all stakeholders.

353. He congratulated UNICEF on the excellent work done at the country level in Togo and mentioned that the organization had allowed the country to make considerable progress in child well-being and development.

354. He expressed concern that Togo still confronted numerous challenges that could create impediments to making children's rights a reality. Togo, with the support of UNICEF and other partners, would focus in particular on the social sector, such as health care, access to drinking water, hygiene and sanitation, education and protection, to address these challenges.

355. The representative of Benin noted that the country programme was the result of a concerted effort between UNICEF and national stakeholders, including the Government.

356. In 2015, Benin was declared a polio-free country. In light of this, Benin chose to focus on routine vaccination for children in the country programme. The country had also committed to making drinking water accessible for the whole population by 2021. The representative recognized the added value of UNICEF in achieving this aim as well as that of sanitation.

357. The representative also noted that focus would be placed on synergies between countries within the region to optimize the outcomes of the various programmes in the long term.

358. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/16 (see annex II).

(b) Extensions of ongoing country programmes

359. The President stated that, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2009/11, the Executive Board had been informed of the first two-month extension of the country programme for Niger and the first one-year extension of the country programme for Timor-Leste, both approved by the Executive Director.

360. The Executive Board was requested to approve the second one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia.

361. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/17 (see annex II).

D. Evaluation report and management response

362. The President introduced an evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the cholera epidemic in Yemen: crisis within a crisis, the executive summary of which was presented in document E/ICEF/2018/21, and its management response contained in document E/ICEF/2018/22.

363. The Director of Evaluation presented the report, followed by the Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa, who presented the management response.

364. Delegations thanked UNICEF for the response to the crisis in Yemen and expressed appreciation to staff on the ground for their efforts in a challenging environment.

365. Some delegations thanked management for its swift response and commended UNICEF for prompt action on a number of recommendations.

366. A group of delegations welcomed efforts to improve the timeliness of responses and noted that these efforts should be accelerated and expanded, and be

comprehensive enough to accommodate the potential risks around cholera as well as preparedness.

367. In the light of the coordination issues with the World Health Organization, the group of delegations underlined the significance of clear agreement on mandates, division of labour and the sharing and use of data. The delegations requested further elaboration on the structural questions linked to improved agreements and lessons learned. These lessons went beyond the crisis in question and should be examined in relation to more and better collaboration within the United Nations system.

368. The group of delegations underscored the need for capacity-building within the organization and of partners. The proper and comprehensive training of local partners was crucial. Clarification on plans to build capacity as well as how staffing would be adapted to demands would be appreciated.

369. The group of delegations called upon UNICEF to continue its efforts in systems strengthening, particularly in the water, sanitation and hygiene and health sectors. UNICEF also needed to step up efforts to improve communication for development.

370. More information on gender equality was requested, including whether a gender-based analysis had been undertaken within the parameters of the report and the findings of any such analysis, or barriers to it.

371. The use of real-time evaluations as best practice in the midst of humanitarian responses was highlighted, and it was suggested that UNICEF systematically consider including real-time evaluations in the first phase of large-scale responses. The delegation noted, nonetheless, the value of retrospective analysis as a lesson-learned exercise informing the next steps for better preparedness.

372. Other delegations joined the call for recommendations on more systemic approaches and a systematic, interagency coordinated lessons-learned exercise, as well as a review of relevant coordination mechanisms in future evaluations.

373. Concern was voiced about delays in the response to the cholera epidemic in 2017 and more information would be welcomed on the steps UNICEF was taking to address these delays. The delegation echoed support for efforts to improve data collection.

374. It was noted that humanitarian support should strengthen local organizations, which were often the link between the humanitarian and development sectors in the aftermath of a crisis. A stronger local base would increase the possibilities for sustainability.

375. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/18 (see annex II).

E. UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2018–2021

376. Following an introduction by the Deputy Executive Director, Management, the Comptroller and Director, Division of Financial Administrative Management, presented the financial estimates (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.4).

377. In their general statements, delegations highlighted the need for flexible and predictable funding and to increase core resources. Delegations also commended the emergence of new funding partnerships, especially in the private sector, and attempts to broaden the donor base.

378. A group of delegations appreciated the increase in total income, but noted the implications, such as changes in staffing and bottlenecks in implementation, which could also be relevant to the large cash reserves. The group of delegations welcomed the drawdown of regular and other resources balances and was looking forward to further information on the acceleration of the implementation of funds from other

resources. It welcomed the increase in regular resources in absolute terms, but noted its relative decrease in the share of the budget. It pointed out that enough regular resources should be available for UNICEF to fulfil its core functions and mandate. The organization should have sufficient liquidity in its regular resources, and cash inflows should be able to be absorbed.

379. The group of delegations welcomed the goal of securing a 28 per cent share of regular resources by 2021 and called for intensified efforts to reach this goal, recognizing the role donors had to play. It would welcome more information on the projected estimates from the private sector and an inclusive, forward-looking discussion on the organization's accountability and funding strategies for the future. It closed by acknowledging the support of UNICEF to the United Nations Development Group cost-sharing strategy, in particular the resident coordinator system. The Comptroller noted that UNICEF was able to absorb the spike in income. He reassured the group of delegations that the strategy to achieve the regular resources was on track. With regard to the cost-sharing strategy, he noted that the methodology and implementation would be crafted in 2019.

380. A point raised from the floor was that, given the effort to achieve flexible and predictable funding and the role that thematic funding played in achieving programme results through long-term planning, it would be useful for estimated income from thematic funding to be specified for future presentations.

381. The Deputy Executive Director confirmed that there had been changes in financial estimates compared to the integrated budget to account for cost-sharing and an increase in security costs. She suggested that in the future the annual presentation of financial estimates show the original approved budget versus any significant revisions.

382. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/19 (see annex II).

F. Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2017

383. The Deputy Executive Director ad interim, Partnerships, introduced the report (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.5), which was followed by a presentation by the Director, Division of Private Fundraising and Partnerships.

384. A group of delegations welcomed the financial results for 2017 as compared with 2016, which included an almost 6 per cent increase in regular resources income. While other resources income had fallen short of its target, it had increased by almost $100 million, or 13 per cent, due to humanitarian contributions. The group welcomed the expansion of fundraising activities to include the field offices, and requested that future year-end financial reports specify the different funding channels. The group reiterated a request that UNICEF provide more information on the investment programme. The work of UNICEF with corporations, major donors and foundations as well as the non-financial sectors of private fundraising and partnerships was welcomed, as was the emphasis on innovation. UNICEF was requested to report on the effectiveness of programmes due to this cooperation.

385. Expressing its support for the statement made by the group of delegations, another delegation encouraged UNICEF to engage its private partners in structured financing dialogues. The delegation requested a detailed account of how resource mobilization would yield the planned results for 2018–2021. UNICEF was also encouraged to undertake a more in-depth analysis of its non-financial engagement work.

386. The Chair of the Standing Group of National Committees reported that the National Committees had been responsible for 86 per cent of private sector revenue in 2017. The Committees remained the main providers of regular resources to UNICEF and were responsible for 100 per cent of gross revenue from legacies and 85 per cent from individual donors. Reiterating concerns raised at the start of the session related to the proposed 1 per cent levy on tightly earmarked development funds from the private sector, the Chair expressed support for the proposal to undertake a risk analysis, which had been put forward by a delegation.

387. In their national statements, several delegations took note of the resource contributions of UNICEF private sector partners, with some delegations commending UNICEF on its success in diversifying its funding base and others calling for further broadening to deepen financial sustainability.

388. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/20 (see annex II).

G. Joint report on cost recovery

389. The President noted that the joint report on cost recovery (DP/FPA-ICEF-UNW/2018/1) had been prepared in accordance with decision 2017/14 and decision 2017/7, in which the Board had requested UNICEF, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to continue consultations with Member States with regard to the cost-recovery policy and to present evidence-based proposals for harmonized cost-recovery policies. He recalled that a draft joint report had been shared with the Executive Board in April and that the Board had agreed to postpone the formal consideration of the report to the second regular session 2018.

390. The Deputy Executive Director, Management, presented the report.

391. A group of delegations expressed appreciation for the joint report and for agencies' past efforts in harmonizing their cost-recovery policies. The group noted that agreeing and maintaining a harmonized framework had challenges and thanked the agencies for being frontrunners within the United Nations development system in this regard.

392. The group concluded that the current harmonized cost-recovery framework was the most feasible option to adhere to the guiding principles while reducing risks for the financial set-up, and presented proposals to further improve this framework. The group of delegations said that it would like to see a further harmonization of the current cost classification categories to provide a more clear, transparent and standardized framework, loopholes closed and the number of waivers granted reduced as much as possible, and proposed maintaining the existing cost-recovery rates while exploring the full spectrum for differentiated rates.

393. It was noted during delegations' general statements that questions related to the one percent levy were part of a broader discussion and needed to be discussed according to the procedures established in resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

394. During the general statements, a delegation noted that it supported a pragmatic approach to cost recovery that promoted efficiency and effectiveness, but required more time to understand the long-term implications of the proposals.

395. The Executive Board adopted decision 2018/21 (see annex II).

H. Report of the field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF to Bhutan, 17 to 22 April 2018, and report of the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP to Uganda, 30 April to 4 May 2018

396. The report of the field visit to Bhutan (UNICEF/2018/EB/10) was introduced by H.E. Mr. Tore Hattrem, Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Norway, and President of the UNICEF Executive Board. The presentation of the report was preceded by a video.

397. The visiting delegation had the opportunity to witness UNICEF cooperation with the Government and other partners, including the United Nations country team. The delegation had been informed that the main challenge facing women and children was exposure to different forms of violence. UNICEF advocacy with the Government had helped to strengthen the policy and legislative environment for child protection.

398. Observations made by the delegation included the unity among various levels of Government around the cause of children, and the Government's openness to ideas and commitment and its willingness to invest resources in programmes and projects that benefited children, particularly the most vulnerable and disadvantaged. The delegation encouraged more inclusive support for the young monks and encouraged UNICEF, in collaboration with the national authorities, to continue to develop clear objectives based on the relevant Sustainable Development Goals to further increase the country programme's efficiency.

399. The representative of Bhutan expressed the Government's deep appreciation for the first Bureau field visit, which it regarded as a significant milestone in the country's 45 years of partnership with UNICEF. The timing of the visit had been opportune, as Bhutan stood at the threshold of graduating from a least developed country and the 2018–2023 period was critical to addressing the remaining economic challenges. The representative welcomed the adoption of the country programme for 2019–2023, which was closely aligned with the Bhutan Twelfth Five-Year Plan and the programmes of other United Nations agencies. The Government expressed its determination to address the remaining challenges.

400. The Permanent Representative of the Sudan, H.E. Mr. Omer Dahab Fadl Mohamed, introduced the report of the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP to Uganda (DP/FPA/OPS-ICEF-UNW-WFP/2018/CRP.1), following a video.

401. The delegation met with Mr. Yoweri Museveni, President of Uganda, as well as high-level politicians, regional and local government officials, beneficiaries, NGOs and representatives of civil society and Member States, and visited the site of several United Nations-assisted projects in Kampala.

402. It focused its effectiveness assessment on four key themes linked to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, namely, overall alignment with national development priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals; links between development and governance, humanitarian, and peace and security issues shown through the refugee response; gender; and agriculture.

403. The Ambassador highlighted some main observations. The delegation found strong links between the work of the United Nations and the national development priorities and Sustainable Development Goals, indicative of the clear working relationship between the United Nations and the Government of Uganda. The delegation welcomed the country's open refugee policy and its demonstrated leadership in tackling this issue. Challenges included balancing support for refugees and locals, scaling up interventions, improving communication and developing

appropriate infrastructure. The delegation saw strong community engagement in gender issues and learned about a "One United Nations" action plan to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse. The visit helped delegates to understand the importance of agriculture for the economy and for the medium- and long-term coexistence of rural people in Uganda and refugees.

404. The delegation made several recommendations to strengthen the impact of the United Nations in Uganda and the work of the Executive Boards.

405. A group of delegations noted that UNICEF was well-placed to contribute to the recommendation to focus on long-term sustainability and develop national capacity, and encouraged the organization to help improve the United Nations "Deliver as One" initiative in the country. The delegations also noted a request from the country team for a dialogue between the United Nations governing bodies in Geneva, New York and Rome so that decisions taken were in line with realities on the ground and all agencies were working towards the same end at all levels.

I. Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2019

406. The Secretary presented the provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2019.

J. Adoption of draft decisions

407. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2018/13 through 2018/21 (see annex II).

K. Closing statements by the Executive Director of UNICEF and the President of the Executive Board

408. The Executive Director thanked the President for his leadership, stewardship and advice over the year, and the participants for sharing their ideas and advice on how future sessions could be made more efficient and strategic. She extended her appreciation to those Member States that had indicated that additional resources had been allocated to UNICEF.

409. The Executive Director was appreciative of the feedback received on the innovation work of UNICEF and welcomed ideas from the Board on how the organization could partner with the private sector to identify and scale up innovative approaches.

410. She welcomed the proposal from the Member States for UNICEF to produce a risk analysis of the impact of any potential levy on the private sector, while underscoring the importance of cooperation with the private sector and the critical need to make it easier to work with businesses, global partnerships and international financial institutions.

411. UNICEF was grateful to the Executive Board for its support of the contributions of UNICEF to the Secretary-General's efforts to reposition the United Nations development system and to find new efficiencies. UNICEF had embraced the reform agenda and would deliver on it, together with its sister agencies, including through the implementation of the common chapter to the strategic plans. The organization was already committed to improving the efficiency and quality of the information shared with the Executive Board and would follow its guidance to continue to improve the working methods of the Board.

412. The President reviewed the session's accomplishments, which represented the culmination of significant work undertaken during the year. Several decisions had

been adopted to, among other things, address aspects of United Nations reform, improve the working methods of the Board and deepen insight into the importance of the quality and transparency of funding. The Board had approved country programmes whose geographical span demonstrated the broad reach of UNICEF to embrace children in need, wherever they may be.

413. Following the visit by the Bureau of the Executive Board to Bhutan in April, the President had been impressed by the commitment of partners in the field, and by his interactions with children and young people, particularly the young monks.

414. He emphasized that the Board should continue its efforts to proactively drive forward the repositioning of the United Nations development system. This would include seeking ways to improve and streamline working methods with the Boards of UNICEF sister organizations, revisiting donor funding and prioritizing the maintenance of an adequate level of core resources and flexible non-core funding.

415. A culture of accountability and increased efficiency and effectiveness was at the heart of systematic evaluation, and in 2018, the Board had helped to shape a new UNICEF evaluation policy. Congruent with the UNICEF mission to safeguard children and their future, the Board had extended its full support to the Executive Director's zero-tolerance approach towards sexual exploitation, workplace discrimination and gender harassment, which aligned with actions taken by the Secretary-General.

416. The President commended his fellow Bureau members for their earnest and energetic teamwork, and the Executive Director and UNICEF senior management for their efforts to keep UNICEF relevant, effective and up-to-date. He wished the new Secretary of the Executive Board a continued successful tenure.

Annex I

Special focus session on innovation

1. The President introduced the special focus session on innovation and the moderator, Ms. Hannah Godefa, a young advocate for education and girls' empowerment. An introductory video was presented to start the session.

2. The moderator introduced the two guest speakers, who discussed some of the complex challenges presented in the video: Mr. Nick Thompson, Editor-in-Chief, WIRED magazine, and Ms. Stephanie Sy, CEO and Lead Data Scientist at Thinking Machines Data Science.

3. During a moderated discussion, the speakers raised some key issues related to innovation for children and young people and shared insights with Board members. They considered the important role of Governments in shaping the future direction of emerging technologies through responsible decisions and strategies, setting standards and regulations, investing in education and being aware of the changes ahead. They spoke of the rapid rate of change and the need to be prepared for change.

4. The juncture of the private and public sectors was addressed as was the particular role of each of these sectors. Technology companies were driven by profit while actors in the public sector strived for social impact. The most successful partnerships were those which had a common metric that involved all stakeholders and which harnessed the creativity of the private sector with the responsibility of the public sector. Forecasting was highlighted as the most important use of technology in managing a humanitarian crisis and was an example of where the public sector could drive the motivation to use the technological prowess developed in the private sector.

5. Education and capacity-building also emerged as key points. Citizens needed to learn as employment trends shifted. With shorter job cycles, there would be more need for mid-career education, lifelong learning and upskilling. Education was a means to empower, but also protect people.

6. The dawn of artificial intelligence was a reality and Governments should develop comprehensive national strategies to address related issues, such as data collection and privacy, as well as the impact of job transformation.

7. Data collection was also mentioned as a priority in any discussion on innovation and the role of UNICEF as a source of data for all. Aside from the question of the privacy of data, data should be democratic and not controlled by a handful of companies.

8. A telling point was the question of the perception of the technology sector. Children and young people did not consider technology as a stand-alone subject but rather something that was integral to every part of their lives.

9. Members of the Board thanked UNICEF, the moderator and the speakers for the interesting and thought-provoking session. It was suggested to include innovation on the agenda of future sessions.

10. Delegations gave some examples of government initiatives in the field of innovation to illustrate how they were mainstreaming and/or addressing it. These included: appointing a technology ambassador, funding better research, introducing new laws, allocating more resources, creating a digital strategy, starting an innovation lab to grant seed money for innovative projects and establishing privacy protection guidelines and laws.

11. Delegations believed that it was important to make the internet a safe place for children and to protect them from any negative effects of technological advancement. Concern about the vulnerability of children was raised and regulations should be put in place to safeguard their welfare and rights vis-à-vis technology and the internet.

12. The role of the private sector was broached and delegations confirmed that there were many opportunities for collaboration and complementarity. For fruitful outcomes, businesses needed to understand the spirit of the Sustainable Development Goals.

13. The merit of small, local initiatives was measured against large-scale projects. Delegations spoke of research to develop innovation that answered local needs and of the local ownership of issues.

14. The importance of education was underscored. It needed to move with the times in order to prepare children for the changing world, and programmes needed to be developed that taught children to think innovatively, to become innovators and producers of technology and not just users. The representative of SOS Children's Villages compounded this by saying that technical solutions should be found with children, and that their inclusion and participation in the way forward was essential.

15. Answering a question from the Executive Director about potential large-scale projects for UNICEF, the speakers and moderator made the following suggestions: consider how to introduce all young people and children to artificial intelligence, including in the poorest regions; create a common data platform; and invest in girls and marginalized children.

16. An accessible, high-quality educational environment about and within technology was identified as a priority for the innovation agenda. UNICEF had a role to play in this agenda as it contributed to the educational environment; continued to be an innovation partner; addressed gender participation and promoted inclusiveness; pursued data collection and its use; protected children as they navigated online and guided them to benefit rather than suffer from technology; and was committed to leaving no one behind, using technology to make society a better place and bridging the gap in the level of access to and the use of innovation.

Annex II

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2018

First regular session

2018/1
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Ghana, Jordan and Mauritania (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.1–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.3) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 13 November to 1 December 2017 and that the common country programme document, including the aggregate indicative budget, for Cabo Verde (DP/FPA/OPS-ICEF/CCPD/2018/CPV/1) was made available to Member States for their comments and input from 30 October to 17 November 2017, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis and in accordance with decision 2014/1 the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Ghana, Jordan and Mauritania (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.1–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.3) and the common country programme document, including the aggregate indicative budget, for Cabo Verde (DP/FPA/OPS-ICEF/CCPD/2018/CPV/1).

First regular session
6 February 2018

2018/2
Evaluation report and management response, road map to a revision of the evaluation policy of UNICEF and plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the evaluation synthesis report entitled "Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016" and its executive summary (E/ICEF/2018/4), including its findings, conclusions and recommendations;

2. *Welcomes* the management response to the evaluation synthesis report (E/ICEF/2018/5), including actions to improve performance in humanitarian contexts and strengthen policy guidance and programming;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to provide an update to the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2019 on the implementation of the actions to which UNICEF committed in its management response to the evaluation synthesis report;

4. *Welcomes* the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2018/3);

5. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to draw on lessons learned from previous reviews, evaluation reports and management responses to ensure the effectiveness of planned evaluations;

6. *Also requests* UNICEF to present with each evaluation report a formal management response setting out actions and a timetable for implementation;

7. *Further requests* UNICEF to include in the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF the details of the implementation of recommendations set out in evaluation reports and agreed to in management responses, in order to monitor progress, including any implementation issues;

8. *Requests* UNICEF to seek out opportunities with other United Nations agencies for joint evaluations of joint programming as well as the common chapter of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

9. *Endorses* the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021;

10. *Welcomes* the preparation of the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF, including plans for consultation with Member States; requests UNICEF to take on-board guidance from previous decisions, evaluations, reports and reviews to improve the independence, credibility, effectiveness, resources and utility of the evaluation function; and also requests UNICEF to present the policy for consideration and decision at the annual session of 2018.

First regular session
7 February 2018

2018/3
UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016 and report of the Board of Auditors

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Board of Auditors for the financial period that ended on 31 December 2016 (A/72/5/Add.3) as well as recommendations from prior years;

2. *Notes* the 2016 unqualified audit opinion issued by the United Nations Board of Auditors for UNICEF;

3. *Also notes* the finding of the Board of Auditors that UNICEF has, in recent years, taken steps to strengthen financial and managerial control over its operations;

4. *Encourages* UNICEF to prioritize the implementation of the seven main audit recommendations identified by the Board of Auditors for the year ended 31 December 2016;

5. *Also encourages* UNICEF to fully address outstanding recommendations from previous reports of the Board of Auditors, and in particular to strengthen efforts to tackle areas of recurring audit recommendations;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to continue its efforts to prevent and detect instances of fraud, to thoroughly review the underlying circumstances that led to the cases of fraud in order to minimize future risks and to take steps to improve actions for the recovery of funds;

7. *Also requests* the Executive Director to provide a separate management response to the key findings and recommendations of the annual report of the Board of Auditors, and to submit this report to the Executive Board, along with the annual report of the Board of Auditors, starting with the first regular session of 2019.

First regular session
7 February 2018

2018/4
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2018 workplan and proposed budget

A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenses for the 2018 fiscal year (special purpose)

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2018 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted special purpose expenses of $223 million, as detailed in the table below.

(Millions of United States dollars)

Investment fund costs funded by special purpose regular resources	105.0
Other private sector fundraising costs funded by special purpose regular resources	64.4
Total private sector fundraising and partnership costs funded by special purpose regular resources	**169.4**
Private sector fundraising and partnership costs funded by special purpose other resources	**53.6**
Total special purpose expenses	**223.0**

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF

(a) To incur expenses, as summarized in column II of table 3 of the document E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.1, and to decrease or increase expenses up to the levels indicated in columns I and III of the same table, should the apparent revenue from fundraising decrease or increase to the levels indicated in columns I and III;

(b) To redeploy resources between the various regular resources budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1, above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2018 approved workplan;

3. *Encourages* the Executive Director to identify and respond to new market opportunities, should they arise, between Executive Board sessions and to notify the Board accordingly;

4. *Requests* UNICEF to present, as part of the midterm review of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, a review of the impact of its non-financial engagement with the private sector and, in 2021, a review of the impact of the investment funds.

B. Budgeted revenue for the year 2018

The Executive Board

Notes that, for the period 1 January to 31 December 2018, Private Fundraising and Partnerships revenue is budgeted at $1.6 billion, as shown in column II of table 3 of document E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* the allocation of investment funds amounting to $105 million for 2018;

2. *Also approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2019 of $16.9 million (or 10 per cent of the special purpose regular resources allocation of $169.4 million), to be absorbed in the annual Private Fundraising and Partnerships budget for 2019.

First regular session
7 February 2018

Annual session

2018/5
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.4–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.6) were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 16 March to 5 April 2018, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents, including aggregate indicative budgets, for Kenya, Malawi and Rwanda (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.4–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.6).

Annual session
12 June 2018

2018/6
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the one-year extensions of the country programmes for Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congo, Cuba, Mexico and Sierra Leone, which were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.7;

2. *Approves* the one-year extension of the country programme for the Syrian Arab Republic, following a previous one-year extension, as presented in table 2 of document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.7.

Annual session
11 June 2018

2018/7
Annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2017 of the Executive Director of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/9), including the report on the implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and achievements against the Integrated Results and Resources Framework of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014–2017 (E/ICEF/2018/9/Add.1), the annex on UNICEF implementation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, 2017 and the data companion and scorecard;

2. *Also takes note* of the UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit (E/ICEF/2018/11);

3. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned reports to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance of the Executive Board;

4. *Recognizes* the inter-agency efforts being made to advance the common chapter and requests UNICEF to continue consultations with the United Nations funds and programmes on the harmonized format for common chapter reporting;

5. *Welcomes* the mentioning of the common chapter in the annual report and asks UNICEF to report on the status of the implementation of the common chapter, starting with the annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director, and to present the findings at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards and at the annual session;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to engage with the Secretary-General, other United Nations development system entities and Member States with a view to supporting the full implementation of General Assembly resolutions 71/243 and 72/279, including its contribution to a smooth transition and business continuity of the resident coordinator system;

7. *Also requests* UNICEF, as a United Nations development system entity, to engage closely with the Secretary-General and Member States to support the preparation of a well-thought-out implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system, including on the operationalization of its funding arrangements, to be presented to the General Assembly;

8. *Further requests* UNICEF to present a preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of resolution 72/279 for UNICEF to the Executive Board at its second regular session in 2018;

9. *Requests* UNICEF, in accordance with resolution 72/279, to provide its contribution to the adequate, predictable and sustainable funding of the resident coordinator system, in line with the forthcoming implementation plan for the inception of the reinvigorated resident coordinator system to be presented to the General Assembly, on an annual basis starting 1 January 2019;

10. *Recalls* Executive Board decision 2017/14 to improve future structured dialogues on financing and to present a proposal to the Executive Board no later than the second regular session of 2018 on how it plans to use the structured dialogue on financing as a tool to improve the quality and transparency of funding and to better match resources to the outcomes of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, and encourages UNICEF to provide in advance an overview of funding gaps in relation to the

implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, taking into account both regular and other resources;

11. *Welcomes* the UNICEF Executive Director's commitment to implementing resolutions 71/243 and 72/279 and in this regard encourages the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF to work together with the secretariats of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme to produce a joint response to the joint meeting of the Executive Boards segment on working methods by no later than four weeks before the second regular session 2018, allowing for a consultation process among Member States ahead of that session of 2018;

12. *Encourages* the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF to continue pursuing ways to improve the working methods of the Executive Board and to generate additional cost savings, including in the preparation of formal Executive Board documents in compliance with the rules on the official and working languages of UNICEF, and decides to consider the number of yearly field visits of the Executive Board of UNICEF at the September Board session 2018.

Annual session
13 June 2018

2018/8
Update on UNICEF actions on strengthening protections (a) against sexual exploitation and abuse and (b) against workplace sexual harassment

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note with appreciation* of the Executive Director's zero tolerance of both sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, and appreciates the actions that UNICEF has taken so far to prevent and manage sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, implement further institutional and cultural changes and ensure a joined-up, system-wide, coherent approach;

2. *Also takes note with appreciation* of the independent evaluation that UNICEF is undertaking of its policies and processes on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and the Independent Task Force on workplace gender discrimination and harassment, and requests UNICEF to present the evaluation and Task Force reports and associated management responses to the Executive Board;

3. *Requests* UNICEF management, as required under the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, to present its annual certification to the Executive Board at each annual session, to cover sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, as appropriate, complementing and strengthening its existing reporting, and to provide updates on progress made in that regard, including working with the office of the Victims' Rights Advocate for the United Nations, and further urges UNICEF to consider how to align reporting formats and content with other agencies, where appropriate;

4. *Encourages* the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF to consider the possibility of discussing the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Office for Project Services, UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World

Food Programme in order to increase the efficiency of the Boards and avoid duplication.

Annual session
14 June 2018

2018/9
Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action (E/ICEF/2018/10);

2. *Welcomes* the increase in dialogue between the UNICEF secretariat and the Executive Board on the critical work of UNICEF in humanitarian action, including through the delivery of the first annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action;

3. *Requests* that future annual reports on UNICEF humanitarian action reflect the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, where humanitarian action is mainstreamed in each Goal Area and is a cross-cutting theme, and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, and also requests UNICEF to reflect progress achieved in all geographic regions in a more inclusive manner in subsequent reports.

Annual session
12 June 2018

2018/10
Evaluation reports and management responses and revised evaluation policy of UNICEF

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the annual report for 2017 on the evaluation function in UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/15);

2. *Welcomes* the good progress on evaluation of UNICEF activities, but notes with concern that spending on evaluation as a percentage of total programme expenditure decreased in 2017 and has consistently failed over recent years to reach the target of 1 per cent of programme expenditure as set out in the UNICEF evaluation policy and emphasized in previous Executive Board decisions, and therefore requests UNICEF to reach the target by the end of 2019;

3. *Notes* that the thematic distribution of evaluations in the period 2014–2016 shows a sharp drop in the number of sector-specific evaluations for education and child protection, and calls on UNICEF to ensure a stable delivery rate;

4. *Welcomes* the improvement in the evaluation coverage of cross-cutting themes, and requests UNICEF to include gender equality as a cross-cutting theme in all evaluations and to increase the coverage rate of humanitarian action to one that better reflects the current overall spending of UNICEF in contexts of conflicts and crises;

5. *Takes note* of the reported number of evaluations submitted per region, and requests UNICEF, for especially those regions with the largest programme expenses, to significantly increase evaluation coverage;

6. *Requests* that future annual reports be structured around the Strategic Plan,

2018–2021 (policy areas and spending) and the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF;

7. *Recalls* its decision 2018/2, and takes note of the importance of joint evaluations with other entities, including joint evaluation of the common chapter of the strategic plans of the funds and programmes, and calls on the Evaluation Office and UNICEF to brief the Executive Board at its second regular session of 2018 on planning for this joint evaluation as part of its contribution to broader collaboration on joint evaluations of system-wide activities and to the function of system-wide independent evaluation measures;

8. *Takes note* of the evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age and its executive summary (E/ICEF/2018/16), looks forward to the implementation of the actions described in the management response, and requests an update on the implementation of the recommendations of the evaluation at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2019;

9. *Welcomes* the final proposal for the revised evaluation policy of UNICEF (E/ICEF/2018/14);

10. *Also welcomes* the open and constructive collaboration with Member States in the development of the revised evaluation policy;

11. *Requests* UNICEF to fully implement consistently the revised evaluation policy across all areas of the organization, including different policy areas at headquarters and at the field level, including capacity-building at the country and programme levels;

12. *Endorses* the revised evaluation policy.

Annual session
13 June 2018

2018/11
Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2017 (E/ICEF/2018/13);

2. *Appreciates* the successful outreach activities of the Ethics Office of UNICEF, which led to an enormous increase in the number of requests in 2017, and welcomes the results of the innovative Ethics Dialogue Facilitator Model, raising awareness of ethics and integrity organization-wide through facilitators and with limited resources;

3. *Requests* the Ethics Office to engage proactively in the implementation and coordination of actions against sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace, in accordance with its mandate, and also requests the Ethics Office to provide dedicated and more-detailed reporting on its activities against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in its future reports;

4. *Recalls* that the Ethics Office views the operationalization of the UNICEF Child Safeguarding Policy as unfinished business, and in this regard requests the Ethics Office to provide an assessment in its 2019 annual report on progress, challenges and recommendations for improvements;

5. *Also recalls* that the Ethics Office views that there is an absence of an established policy of when, how and in what format it should be consulted on matters

of ethics standard-setting and policy support, and in this regard requests the Ethics Office and management to formalize this policy, to be set out in the 2019 annual report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF;

6. *Requests* UNICEF to conduct an assessment of the level of resources provided to the Ethics Office, with a view to ensuring that the Office has the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate;

7. *Also requests* UNICEF to provide a separate management response to the key findings and recommendations of the annual report of the Ethics Office, and to submit this report to the Executive Board, along with the annual report of the Ethics Office, starting with the annual session of 2019;

8. *Further requests* UNICEF to share a summary of the results and recommendations of the Global Staff Survey 2017 with the Executive Board, and calls upon UNICEF to take appropriate and effective steps to further improve the speak-up culture within the organization.

Annual session
13 June 2018

2018/12
Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the UNICEF Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2017 annual report to the Executive Board (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.2), including the overall assurance opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of the organization's framework of governance, risk management and control, and encourages the Office to continue to develop the accompanying rationale to aid the Board's understanding of the functioning of key processes;

2. *Welcomes* the supporting analysis for the assurance opinion of the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, and also welcomes the progress made to develop and implement the Office's strategic road map, and requests the Office to include reporting against further key performance indicators related to their work in future annual reports, starting with the report to be presented at the annual session of the Executive Board in 2019;

3. *Requests* the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations to provide more-detailed analysis of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of beneficiaries and sexual harassment in the workplace in accordance with its mandate, including allegations, investigations and actions taken, in its 2018 annual report to the Executive Board;

4. *Recalls* that the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations, in its annual report, confirms that it will conduct work in 2018 to provide assurance that a coherent and effective approach to child protection and safeguarding is successfully embedded in and mainstreamed across UNICEF, and in this regard, requests that (a) the Office, in its assessment and assurance, make specific recommendations for improvements in the approach and policies of UNICEF, as appropriate; and (b) the Office and management develop a system for monitoring progress against key performance indicators, to be reported on in future annual reports of the Office;

5. *Welcomes* the Office's increased focus on key risk areas, the increasing number of internal audits of offices operating in complex humanitarian situations and the efforts to reduce the turnover time of reports to provide timely information to stakeholders;

6. *Takes note* of the Office's plans to undertake an external quality assessment of its audit and investigation teams, and asks the Office to include a summary of its findings and details of progress in implementing its recommendations in its next annual report;

7. *Also takes note* of the fact that no internal audit reports were rated adverse, but also of the decrease in reports rated satisfactory and the increase in reports rated strongly qualified, and encourages UNICEF to continue to develop quality;

8. *Further takes note* of the actions reported in response to the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2016 annual report and Executive Board decision 2017/10, and requests an update on the implementation of actions in response to the Office's 2017 annual report at the annual session of the UNICEF Executive Board in 2019;

9. *Takes note* of the decreased implementation rate of audit recommendations in 2017 compared with 2016, and encourages UNICEF management to implement outstanding audit recommendations and to ensure appropriate follow-up of key improvement areas, such as risk management, the management of implementing partners, fraud risk management and safeguarding, and to update the Executive Board at its annual session in June 2019;

10. *Welcomes* the efforts to minimize the number of actions outstanding for more than 18 months;

11. *Takes note* of the recommendations made to management by the Audit Advisory Committee, and encourages management to consider all recommendations by the Committee;

12. *Welcomes* the implementation of an anti-fraud strategy, and requests the Office to include in future annual reports an analysis of the channels by which allegations of fraud and other misconduct are detected or reported to the Office;

13. *Notes with concern* the consistently low level of recovery of defrauded funds, in particular with regard to third parties, and reiterates its call for management to do all that it can to ensure the timely recovery of any potential loss in investigated cases, and requests UNICEF management to provide, in future management responses, details, broken down by calendar year, of aggregate losses over prior years and cumulative recoveries to date against each year's losses;

14. *Notes with appreciation* that the Office reports that it was allocated appropriate and sufficient resources in 2017, and requests UNICEF to continue to allocate sufficient resources for the Office to ensure a satisfactory number of internal audits and investigations each year;

15. *Requests* UNICEF to continue to focus efforts on improving investigation timelines, noting the increasing number of cases pending for investigation from year to year.

Annual session
13 June 2018

Second regular session

2018/13
Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2019

The Executive Board

Adopts the programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2019 as a flexible framework subject to revisions as appropriate in the course of the year.

Joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP (date to be confirmed)

First regular session *5–8 February 2019*	*Annual session* *11–14 June 2019*	*Second regular session* *11–13 September 2019*
Organizational and procedural matters	**Organizational and procedural matters**	**Organizational and procedural matters**
Election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Executive Board *(D)* (8 January 2019)[1]		Proposed programme of work for the Executive Board sessions in 2020 *(D)*
Programme and policy matters	**Programme and policy matters**	**Programme and policy matters**
UNICEF programme cooperation:	Annual report for 2018 of the Executive Director of UNICEF *(D)*	UNICEF programme cooperation:
Country programme documents *(D)*	UNICEF report on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit[2] *(I)*	Country programme documents *(D)*
Extensions of ongoing country programmes *(D)*	Annual report on UNICEF humanitarian action *(D)*	Extensions of ongoing country programmes *(D)*
Oral report on UNICEF follow-up to recommendations and decisions of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) Programme Coordinating Board meetings *(I)*	Annual report on the implementation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 *(I)*	Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 *(I)*
Update on UNICEF humanitarian action *(I)*	UNICEF programme cooperation:	Oral update on UNICEF humanitarian action *(I)*
	Country programme documents *(D)*	
	Extensions of ongoing country programmes *(D)*	
Evaluation, audit and oversight matters	**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**	**Evaluation, audit and oversight matters**
Evaluation reports and management responses *(D)*	Annual report for 2018 on the evaluation function in UNICEF *(D)*, and management response	Evaluation reports and management responses *(D)*
	Evaluation reports and management responses *(D)*	

[1] This date is tentative.
[2] The report is considered under the agenda item, "Annual report of the Executive Director of UNICEF".

Report of the Ethics Office of UNICEF for 2018 *(D)*, and management response

Office of Internal Audit and Investigations 2018 annual report to the Executive Board *(D)*, and management response

UNICEF Audit Advisory Committee 2018 annual report *(I)*

Update on policies and processes of UNICEF on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment

Resource, financial and budgetary matters

UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2017 and report of the Board of Auditors *(D)*, and management response

Private Fundraising and Partnerships: 2019 workplan and proposed budget *(D)*

Oral update on the work of the National Committees for UNICEF*(I)*

Resource, financial and budgetary matters

Resource, financial and budgetary matters

UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2019–2022 *(D)*

Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2018 *(I)*

Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the annual session of 2019

Other matters

Address by the Chairperson of the UNICEF Global Staff Association

Reports of the field visits of the Executive Board *(I)*

Provisional list of agenda items for the second regular session of 2019

Other matters

Provisional list of agenda items for the first regular session of 2020

Note: (D) — For decision. The secretariat prepares documentation on the agenda item. The Executive Board is expected to discuss and adopt a decision under the agenda item.

(I) — For information. The secretariat prepares documentation for information. The Executive Board may opt to take a decision under the agenda item.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/14
Working methods

The Executive Board

1. *Reaffirms* the rules of procedure of the Executive Board of UNICEF;

2. *Takes note with appreciation* of the joint response prepared by the secretariats of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)/United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), UNICEF, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to the 2018 joint meeting of the Executive Boards segment on working methods;

3. *Requests* the secretariat of the UNICEF Executive Board to circulate draft decisions at least two weeks prior to each session so that the draft decisions are available at the pre-session, and strongly encourages the Bureau to appoint, at that time, the facilitators for the respective draft decisions, in full respect to equitable regional representation, and in this regard strongly encourages Member States to provide their comments on draft decisions, if possible, prior to the start of the session, with a view to starting informal consultations on the draft decisions on the first day of the session;

4. *Also requests* UNICEF and the members of the Executive Board to make efforts to start all meetings, informal briefings and informal consultations on time and ensure that meetings, informal briefings and informal consultations are planned during United Nations working hours and avoid parallel consultations, to better facilitate the effective and constructive participation of all Member States in the work of the Board;

5. *Further requests* that the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF identify a set of common agenda items, together with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP, with a view to harmonizing the consideration of those agenda items with these agencies, beginning from the first regular session of 2019 onwards;

6. *Requests* the secretariat of the Executive Board of UNICEF to develop, in consultation with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN-Women, a joint online calendar of all Board meetings, to be updated in real time and made available to the Executive Board;

7. *Also requests* UNICEF management to provide a written response to questions raised at informal briefings, upon written request by Member States, before the start of the following formal session;

8. *Further requests* UNICEF to continue to enhance documentation in order to make it more strategic and analytical, and to include best practices, actions being taken to address lessons learned, challenges and risks, building on the interactions with the Board, as appropriate;

9. *Requests* UNICEF to further enhance accessibility and ensure that the file names of Executive Board documents are clearly spelled out and indicate the content of the documents, that these documents can be downloaded in their entirety by agency and that they include full text searchability;

10. *Also requests* UNICEF to engage with the Executive Board and with UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP on the efficient and effective implementation of the guidelines for Executive Board field visits and reporting requirements;

11. *Further requests* UNICEF and its Bureau to give due consideration to gender balance in panels for all meetings;

12. *Requests* the Bureau of UNICEF, in collaboration with the Bureaux of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP, to launch a joint consultative process with Member States starting at the first regular session of 2019, with a view to examining the efficiency and quality of its current sessions, as well as the functions of the joint meeting of the Boards, building on the joint response prepared by the secretariats;

13. *Reaffirms* Executive Board decision 2014/1 and recognizes the significant efficiencies created by rationalizing the country programme document approval process and by allowing Member States to place their comments electronically and finalizing the country programme documents at least six weeks ahead of the session, and recommends that UNICEF considers to improve country programme document presentation;

14. *Decides* to eliminate the yearly field visit of the Bureau of the Executive Board of UNICEF, so as to harmonize with the practice of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UN-Women and WFP, and encourages Bureau members to seek to participate in one of the two other field visits that are available for their participation: the Executive Board field visit and the joint field visit of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/15
Structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report on the structured dialogue on financing the results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021;

2. *Requests* UNICEF to review the format and content of the report on the structured dialogue on financing, in order to further improve the quality of the structured dialogue on financing, including by providing an overview of the funding in relation to the funding requirements for the implementation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, taking into account both regular and other resources;

3. *Encourages* UNICEF to continue working jointly with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) to improve collaboration on structured funding dialogues;

4. *Welcomes* the commitment of UNICEF, in close collaboration with the Secretary-General's transition team and other programmes, funds and specialized agencies, to implement General Assembly resolution 72/279 of 31 May 2018 on repositioning of the United Nations development system in the context of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; also welcomes the updates provided with preliminary analysis of the financial and other implications of the resolution, and requests UNICEF to continue to engage with the Executive Board in this regard, providing regular updates as of 2019;

5. *Recalls* decision 2018/5 and requests UNICEF to double its contribution to the existing United Nations Sustainable Development Group (UNSDG) cost-

sharing arrangement, in accordance with resolution 72/279, to deposit its 2019 contribution as soon as possible, taking into account the Secretary-General's implementation plan, in order to operationalize the new resident coordinator system as of 1 January 2019, and to report on progress in this regard to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2019;

6. *Requests* that UNICEF present clear, transparent information on its contribution to resident coordinator funding modalities to the Executive Board at the annual session of 2019;

7. *Also requests* that UNICEF, as part of the UNSDG, collaborate with the Secretary-General's transition team to support the establishment of a system-wide approach to implementing all the funding modalities set out in resolution 72/279, including the levy, and to report to the Executive Board at the first regular session of 2019;

8. *Calls* on UNICEF to review its planning, financing and results reporting processes to ensure effective joint collaboration in the context of the revitalized United Nations Development Assistance Framework and to provide an update at the next session of the Executive Board on adjustments required.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/16
Country programme documents

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* that the country programme documents for Benin, Bhutan, Burundi, Cambodia, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Libya, Namibia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Senegal, South Sudan and Togo and the subregional programme document for the Gulf Area (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates) (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.8–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.22/Rev.1), including aggregate indicative budgets, were made available to Member States for their comments and input from 19 June to 9 July 2018, in accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1 on modifications to procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documentation;

2. *Approves* on a no-objection basis, and in accordance with decision 2014/1, the country programme documents for Benin, Bhutan, Burundi, Cambodia, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Lesotho, Libya, Namibia, Nicaragua, the Philippines, Senegal, South Sudan and Togo and the subregional programme document for the Gulf Area (Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates) (E/ICEF/2018/P/L.8–E/ICEF/2018/P/L.22/Rev.1), including aggregate indicative budgets.

Second regular session
13 September 2018

2018/17
Extensions of ongoing country programmes

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the two-month extension of the country programme for Niger and the first one-year extension of the country programme for Timor-Leste, which

were approved by the Executive Director and are presented in table 1 of document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.23;

2. *Approves* the one-year extensions of the country programmes for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Liberia, following previous one-year extensions, as presented in table 2 of document E/ICEF/2018/P/L.23.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/18
Evaluation reports and management responses

The Executive Board

Takes note of the evaluation of the UNICEF Level 3 response to the cholera epidemic in Yemen: crisis within a crisis, its executive summary (E/ICEF/2018/21) and its management response (E/ICEF/2018/22).

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/19
UNICEF Strategic Plan: updated financial estimates, 2018–2021

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the planned financial estimates for the period 2018–2021 as contained in document E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.4 as a flexible framework for supporting UNICEF programmes;

2. *Approves* the integrated resources framework of planned financial estimates for the period 2018–2021 and approves the preparation of country programme expenditure submissions to the Executive Board of up to $710 million from regular resources in 2019, subject to the availability of resources and the continued validity of these planned financial estimates;

3. *Encourages* future financial planning documents to continue to include a separate budget item for both the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations and the Evaluation Office, in line with Executive Board decisions 2017/10, paragraph 14 and 2017/14, paragraph 9 (d);

4. *Requests* UNICEF to provide annual updates to the Executive Board on the progress of funding its reserves for staff liabilities.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/20
Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2017

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the Private Fundraising and Partnerships: financial report for the year ended 31 December 2017 (E/ICEF/2018/AB/L.5);

2. *Recognizes* the funding model of UNICEF, which relies on significant contributions from the private sector;

3. *Requests* UNICEF to present the performance of the National Committees and field offices separately, both with and without structured fundraising activities, in future financial reports;

4. *Also requests* UNICEF to provide in its report presented at the 2019 second regular session, and in regard to its non-financial engagement with the business sector, its strategy for scaling up current results and the result of its collaboration with the other United Nations agencies;

5. *Encourages* UNICEF to allocate adequate resources to provide robust support to its regional and country offices for its non-financial engagement with the business sector.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

2018/21
Joint report on cost recovery

The Executive Board

1. *Recalls* Executive Board decision 2013/5, which endorsed the current harmonized cost-recovery policy, and in this regard recognizes and welcomes the efforts of UNICEF, together with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), in implementing the policy;

2. *Also recalls* Executive Board decisions 2017/7 and 2017/14, in which the Executive Board directed the agencies to implement the cost-recovery policy and ensure full cost recovery proportionally from regular and other resources funding sources, and provide incentives to increase regular resources funding;

3. *Takes note* of the report DP/FPA/ICEF-UNW/2018/1 and the two proposals for the recovery of indirect costs presented therein;

4. *Notes* paragraph 28 (d) of General Assembly resolution 72/279, which calls for a further harmonization of cost recovery by individual United Nations development system entities, and in this regard commends UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women for their harmonized cost-recovery framework and encourages them to work with other entities of the United Nations development system, after due consideration by their respective governing bodies, to adopt a harmonized cost-recovery framework;

5. *Requests* UNICEF, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to jointly review existing cost definitions and classifications of activities and associated costs, with a view to further harmonize their approaches by determining common definitions of cost categories and corresponding activities and functions at a granular level, while taking into account the different business models of the individual agencies, which allows for a full understanding of each categories' composition, options for possible alignment of similar functions to the same cost classifications across agencies, and continues to provide a basis for comparisons among organizations as well as alignment with the strategic plans of the organizations, to be presented to the Executive Board for decision at its second regular session in 2019;

6. *Reaffirms*, in this regard, the harmonized cost-recovery policy endorsed by the Executive Board in its decision 2013/5, and requests UNICEF, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to present a preliminary comprehensive proposal on the cost-recovery policy for consideration by the Executive Board at its first regular

session in 2020, with a view to present a final comprehensive proposal for decision of the Executive Board at its second regular session in 2020;

7. *Requests* UNICEF, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to reduce the granting of waivers lowering the agreed cost-recovery rates and to provide an update on the steps taken in this regard, including on the application of waivers across their organizations, to the Executive Board at its annual session in 2019;

8. *Also requests* UNICEF, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to review in a comprehensive manner cost-recovery rates, as part of the comprehensive proposal;

9. *Further requests* UNICEF, together with UNDP, UNFPA and UN-Women, to present an assessment of the reasons why full cost recovery is not currently being achieved, as part of the comprehensive proposal.

Second regular session
14 September 2018

Annex III

Report of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP held on 1 June 2018

A. Joint efforts to strengthen coherence, collaboration and efficiency in the field — effective ways to deliver results together to successfully address programme country priorities in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

1. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS opened the joint meeting of the Executive Boards on 1 June 2018 with a warm welcome to the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations and the participants of the Executive Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP.

2. In her opening remarks, the Deputy Secretary-General underscored the timeliness of the joint meeting of the Executive Boards following the adoption the previous day (on 31 May 2018) of General Assembly resolution 72/279 on the repositioning of the United Nations development system. The repositioning required a system-wide change management process in which the Executive Boards had a key role in holding the United Nations development system accountable; creating an enabling environment to drive the reforms through a new resident coordinator system; and driving cohesive action, including through a system-wide strategic document to accelerate alignment of the 2030 Agenda. She encouraged Member States to be bold in reviewing the functions and legislative roles of the joint meeting of the Boards. The case study on Sudan offered a useful lens through which to view United Nations coherence at country level. The immensity of global challenges demanded the collective action embodied in the delivering-as-one approach to address all three dimensions (social, economic and environmental) identified in the Sustainable Development Goals. Tackling inequalities required generation and sharing of disaggregated data and evidence to address the multiple forms of inequality.

3. The Deputy Secretary-General stressed that the United Nations development system must: (a) intensify international support to joint efforts in overcoming rising inequalities; (b) strengthen collaboration and coherence of the humanitarian-development-peacebuilding nexus; (c) increase investments in sustainable and resilient infrastructure; (d) reach out to and engage young people, girls in particular; and (e) take partnerships to a new level, including with civil society, the private sector, and international financial institutions.

4. In his remarks, the Administrator of UNDP characterized the joint meeting of the Boards, following the adoption of resolution 72/279, as a litmus test for the operationalization of a reformed United Nations development system. The meeting marked the beginning of a new era that required a different collective approach, as reflected in the 2030 Agenda.

5. A concerted United Nations development system had to: (a) help countries reset their approach to sustainable development and translate the Sustainable Development Goals into national development agendas; and (b) set up transformational steps to manage the evolution of the United Nations development system to meet the promise of the 2030 Agenda. Such repositioning emerged both from resolution 72/279 and from the experience to date with the delivering-as-one approach.

6. The Goals, focusing on the multidimensional aspects of poverty and inequality, demanded that United Nations organizations think in terms of systemic, multifaceted solutions that embraced social, economic and environmental considerations. UNDP

had a vital role to play as a member of the United Nations system, as embodied in frameworks such as the common chapter of the strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women.

7. The Executive Director of UNICEF also noted that the United Nations had entered a new era with resolution 72/279. Each organization had to operationalize reform in a way best suited to programme countries, focused on new ways to work together. That included expanding beyond accepted ways of collaborating, building on initiatives to explore innovative partnerships and use block chain and satellite imaging tools to plan and monitor field work.

8. A major collective challenge was how to plant the seeds of development in humanitarian planning and operations to address root causes and mitigate crisis impact, an area where the United Nations development system had begun identifying and financing collective, multi-year outcomes. That included jointly coordinating needs assessments; increasing investments in analysis and evaluations; and structuring innovative, predictable, flexible financing for collective outcomes.

9. The common chapter of the strategic plans gave the four organizations a platform to drive United Nations reform collectively in six thematic areas. Complementing those efforts were new initiatives in which two or more of the four organizations were collaborating in one or more of the six thematic areas at regional and country levels, especially for accelerator initiatives. The organizations had also set up complaint mechanisms to address sexual exploitation and abuse in humanitarian situations, consolidated their premises at the zonal office level, pooled agency guest houses, and expanded globally shared service centres.

Case study of Sudan

10. The former United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan (and current Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq), who participated via video link, stressed that humanitarian, development and peace activities were taking place simultaneously in Sudan. The country team pursued achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through the new way of working.

11. As part of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) process, a mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS) team mission identified accelerators for the Goals, which the Government integrated into its national development plans. Likewise, the country team imbedded the MAPS accelerators into the UNDAF and the humanitarian response plan.

12. In implementing the humanitarian-development-peace network, the country team developed the two plans together; the humanitarian response plan was expanded to a multi-year plan and aligned with the UNDAF. The aim was to establish an organic connection between the two planning frameworks for a more coherent approach, and ensure a smooth transition from crisis through recovery to development. The country team fielded a second MAPS mission in October 2017 to identify collective objectives to hold the international community and the Government mutually accountable for the Goals. With the support of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the country team set up financing frameworks and an improved United Nations coordination platform.

13. The UNICEF Resident Representative in Sudan (and Acting Resident Coordinator ad interim), who also participated via video link, underscored that the United Nations development system sought to use the deliver-as-one approach in Sudan to address its complex challenges. The country had lost much of its wealth when South Sudan seceded and had been suffering economically, facing significant

debt problems, compounded by mounting social deficiencies, an inflation crisis, lack of fuel and an influx of some 200,000 refugees from South Sudan.

14. Because it was impossible to tackle those challenges only through a humanitarian response, UNICEF focused on long-term development investments, for example, in water and school systems. The funds and programmes realized early on that their close collaboration, for example, in delivering life-saving health interventions, had longer-term sustainable results. The delivering-as-one approach the country team took in Sudan very much anticipated the adoption of resolution 72/279, and was proof that a collaborative United Nations development system was far more impactful. For maximum impact, donors, likewise, had to work together and invest more in development than in humanitarian response.

15. The UNFPA Regional Director for the Arab States highlighted that the United Nations development system had begun harmonizing the work of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG). A review of regional support to country teams by the Sustainable Development Goals task force had led to the establishment of the country support team for the Goals that used the MAPS approach, and provided monitoring, evaluation and reporting backstopping.

16. The team worked with the League of Arab States to set up a regional coordination infrastructure to guide roll-out and integration of the Goals in national and regional development frameworks. That process followed three steps: (a) countries took stock of their capacity and support needs, after which two MAPS missions were fielded; (b) a data working group sought to make data available to all United Nations organizations; and (c) a task force focused on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda used population data and indicators to ensure a people-centred approach. Similarly, the Arab Forum for Sustainable Development served as a regional coordination mechanism in which all United Nations organizations participated.

17. The Deputy Permanent Representative of Sudan to the United Nations drew attention to the country's main challenges: (a) the loss of over 90 per cent of its hard currency resources, more than 60 per cent of government earnings, and almost 30 per cent of geographical area, owing to the secession of South Sudan; (b) its status as a heavily indebted poor country; (c) its economic burden in hosting two million refugees; (d) the economic and social impact of two decades of sanctions (1998–2017); and (e) the difficulty in attracting adequate development assistance and foreign investment.

18. Sudan had, nevertheless, partnered with the United Nations, and signed in 2014 a tripartite agreement with WFP for humanitarian assistance for refugees from South Sudan, which helped to divert a hunger crisis. Sudan was also working closely with the international community to address regional human trafficking. Sudan hoped resolution 72/279 would lead to a more impactful coordinated United Nations peace, security and development response that would make the country a model for peacebuilding in Africa.

19. The presidents of the four Executive Boards, the heads of the six United Nations organizations and members of the Executive Boards were actively engaged throughout the session and provided a number of comments on the joint efforts of the United Nations development system to strengthen coherence, collaboration and efficiency in the field:

(a) General Assembly resolution 72/279 called for a different approach that would make the United Nations development system efficient, effective, transparent and accountable at all levels and especially in the field;

(b) United Nations development system organizations had to pursue unified delivery based on a common framework and reconsider their individual roles within a revamped resident coordinator system;

(c) The Executive Boards needed to improve their working methods and the efficiency and transparency of their governance structures to drive the reform forward;

(d) The joint meeting of the Board could serve as the central forum for the organizations to report on their collective work to implement provisions of the common chapter;

(e) The organizations had to drive forward a coherent, integrated approach to the implementation of the Goals and the humanitarian-development-peace nexus;

(f) Member States' guidance to and collaboration with the United Nations development system had to be grounded in a multi-stakeholder approach, including civil society and the private sector, to ensure delivery of the Goals and drive United Nations reform;

(g) The United Nations needed a stronger institutional incentive for organizations to focus on prevention, and not on a reactive humanitarian approach, as it was more costly;

(h) A smooth transition toward a UNDP-delinked resident coordinator system was important so as not to disrupt the implementation of the 2030 Agenda;

(i) Multi-year donor funding compacts were the surest way to ensure consistent, sustained delivery of the United Nations development assistance to drive the Goals;

(j) The common chapter in the new strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women was an excellent tool to drive reform at the field level, ensure less duplication and joint back office services, and serve as the litmus test for coordination on the ground;

(k) Technology and innovation were key for the achievement of the Goals; this meant it was imperative to address the technology gap between developed and developing countries when delivering assistance;

(l) Monitoring, evaluation and reporting needed to play a central role, not only in gauging delivery against the Goals, but also in measuring United Nations system-wide coherence;

(m) Using the stocktaking and MAPS experience within a coordinated United Nations context in the Sudan case study can serve as a model for accountability and lessons learned for other countries;

(n) Development assistance had to be grounded in national priorities and adaptive to the country context, in line with the principle of national ownership and the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

20. In response, the former United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan noted that conditions for implementing the new way of working depended on local contexts. It was important that assistance was adaptive and flexible to reflect the fluidity of humanitarian-development structures, and that multi-year funding ensured the greatest impact. While country teams, as in Sudan, had the necessary capacity to carry out their work, the phasing out of funding after an emergency was often debilitating. Flexibility between humanitarian and development was therefore key. Using the UNDAF as the sole programming tool was workable as long as the

framework was detailed, it included an accountability framework, and adequate funds were allocated.

21. The Administrator of UNDP stressed that the revamped resident coordinator system would have a central role in determining systemic success of the reform agenda. The new generation of UNDAFs and the common chapter offered the principal tools to measure, monitor, evaluate and report on results. Similarly, MAPS was a tool that brought the United Nations system together. However, incentives had to be aligned in terms of governance, funding and activities through a compact between programme country and donor Governments and the United Nations built on mutual accountability. While measurement of success — for example, of the common chapter — was critical, it was important to measure outcomes and not numbers, satisfaction of clients and not quality of reports. He appealed to Member States to work collectively with the United Nations organizations to determine how to measure results that actually made a difference. Funding, key in that endeavour, depended less on quantitative amounts than on how the development system was funded.

22. The Executive Director of UNICEF echoed the importance of flexible, multi-year funding and the readiness of the United Nations development system to demonstrate through results how that funding model was more impactful. The organizations aligned their country programme documents (CPDs) to the UNDAF; as such, Board guidance on how to improve the CPDs would be welcome. While the common chapter was an excellent coordinating tool, its success depended on how UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women coordinated with other United Nations organizations. It was important to manage and coordinate the skills divide between humanitarian and development actors to ensure the right capacities were in the right place, including for targeted services.

23. The Executive Director of UNFPA characterized the humanitarian-development-peace nexus as a key component to harmonizing all 17 Goals to reinforce areas of progress and to ensure the integration of the concerns of young people. The United Nations youth strategies built on data and the readiness of Governments to take advantage of the demographic dividend and the compact for young people in humanitarian action; it served as a primary vector to ensure that young people were not left behind. Flexible, multi-year funding was key to achieving the Goals and measuring their impact. Success demanded clarity and leadership at all levels, especially to drive reform and to establish the revamped resident coordinator system.

24. The Deputy Executive Director of WFP noted that Sudan offered an excellent testing ground for the humanitarian-development-peace nexus but that obtaining funding remained a huge challenge. Development funding put in the right place would obviate the need for future peacekeeping and humanitarian programmes. The humanitarian-development-peace nexus was therefore as much a donor challenge as it was a delivery issue because such partners needed to work together to find a solution. While not party to the common chapter, WFP was compliant with its spirit on the ground. While they might eventually lead to replacing the CPDs of the individual organizations, the current generation of UNDAFs did not yet make that possible.

25. The Executive Director of UN-Women highlighted the preparations by UN-Women to engage with other United Nations organizations at country level in setting up common premises and common back-office services, and in programming activities focused on ending violence against women. UN-Women worked collaboratively through the Trust Fund to End Violence against Women and the Spotlight Initiative. The organization was engaged with the Government of Sudan in implementing Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security and in

developing the national action plan, the implementation of which depended on system-wide and partner coordination.

26. The Executive Director of UNOPS, summarizing the main points of discussion, underscored that successfully delivering and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals required incentives that rewarded United Nations development system organizations for working together. There was the need to find new ways of working at the field level with the private sector, civil society and the United Nations under the umbrella of national government leadership and ownership. Reform called for leadership and for organizations to leave their comfort zones, but the results would be beneficial to all.

27. In closing, the President of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS thanked delegations and the representatives of the six United Nations organizations for their participation in the morning segment of the joint meeting.

B. Reflecting on the working methods of the Executive Boards

28. With the adoption of quadrennial comprehensive policy review (QCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations System, the General Assembly underlined the need to enhance system-wide coherence and efficiency, reduce duplication and build synergies across the governing bodies of the entities of United Nations development system. In this regard, it gave a clear mandate to the Bureaux of the Executive Boards to initiate discussions on improving the working methods of the joint meetings of the Executive Boards, so that they offer a platform for exchange on issues with cross-cutting impact while improving the quality, efficiency and transparency of the governing bodies to enable the timely implementation of the QCPR.

29. While a number of steps have already been taken to streamline the working methods of the Executive Boards — increasing informal briefings and consultations, including more joint briefing by the entities; informal discussions between the management of the United Nations development system entities and the Member States; more frequent meetings of the Bureaus; and a common chapter in the new strategic plans of UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN-Women for 2018–2021[2] — there is still scope for further improvements.

30. In response to the QCPR, the Presidents of the Executive Boards of the UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP in 2017 started discussions on the working methods of the Executive Boards. This resulted in a non-paper from the Presidents, released in December 2017, entitled "Discussion Note on Executive Board Working Methods", which was shared with the membership of all four Executive Boards. This non-paper formed the basis of the discussions on the subject during the lunchtime session (topic 2) at the joint meeting of the Executive Boards (JMB).

31. The discussion at the JMB aimed at addressing issues of direct relevance to the working methods of the Executive Boards, including the following:

(a) Bureaux of the Executive Boards – election of members; terms of officers; transition from vice-presidency to presidency;

(b) Interaction between the Presidents of the four Executive Boards;

(c) Sessions of the Executive Boards;

[2] UNOPS and WFP do not have a common chapter in their latest strategic plan, due to the varying time frames in the preparation of the strategic plans.

(d) Engagement between United Nations development agencies and Member States;

(e) Streamlining of field visits (terms of reference, number and frequency of visits, choice of countries, level of participation);

(f) Inter-agency coordination (including joint meetings of the Executive Boards).

32. As a way of guiding the discussions, four breakout groups were constituted from among the delegates representing approximately 40 Member States. Each group was then requested to discuss and identify potential areas for improving the working methods of the Executive Board concentrating on six broad aspects drawn from the 2017 non-paper from the Presidents: bureaux; sessions; conduct of business; participation; field visits; and inter agency cooperation (including the JMB).

33. The President of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, chairing the session, invited the moderators of the four groups to present the conclusions of their discussions on the working methods of the Executive Boards. The four groups then presented the outcome of their discussions from which the conclusions below were drawn.

Outcome of group discussions

Group 1 — Moderator: United Kingdom

34. Group 1 focused on process, and proposed a roadmap for actions the different Executive Boards could take over their next three sessions. These were as follows:

35. At the annual session 2018, the four Executive Boards could make reference to the need to improve working methods through a common formal decision (to be adopted at each of the respective Boards), asking the secretariats of the four Executive Boards to jointly provide the membership of all four Boards with a response to the Presidents' paper developed at the end of 2017. This would continue and advance the conversation between the Boards members and the Board secretariats on the working methods of the Executive Boards.

36. At the second regular session 2018, once briefed by the Board secretariats' joint response to the Presidents' non-paper, the different Executive Boards could nominate facilitators to represent the Bureaux of the Boards to take forward Member States' considerations in a next phase of discussion, based on the Board secretariats' joint response to the Presidents' paper.

37. At the first regular session 2019, once this facilitation process was set up, the Boards could engage in further discussion to develop and agree on a common formal decision on improving working methods. The content of the common decision would require in depth discussion, but would focus on common issues the different Boards could address together, while the proposed roadmap would address key common systemic issues. However, it would not stop individual Boards from making adjustments vertically, and discussing them with the Bureaux of the Boards and their secretariats.

38. On the joint meeting of the Executive Boards, the group moderator noted there were differing views on whether it should be a decision-making body, but group members agreed that, substantively, the joint meeting could be improved by having it address key cross-cutting issues, such sexual exploitation and abuse, and cost recovery.

Group 2 — Moderator: Republic of Korea

39. Group 2 focused its discussions on three issues: (a) succession planning and size of the Bureau; (b) inclusiveness; and (c) number of yearly field visits.

40. Succession planning. They suggested: (a) early selection of Bureau members for each Executive Board, which would allow two or three meetings to take place between outgoing and incoming bureaux; and (b) having vice-chairs become chairs of the subsequent year's bureau. The group did not agree with the proposal to have the Bureaux be composed of two members from each regional group, with one member rotating on an annual basis, which would be impractical for smaller government missions.

41. Inclusiveness. The group suggested: (a) identifying and promoting measures aimed at increasing participation of Board members and inclusivity of observers in joint meetings of the Boards; (b) expanding the scope and frequency of informal briefings and consultations before Board sessions on key topics; and (c) identifying ways of promoting the participation of non-governmental and civil society organizations and private-sector actors in joint sessions of the Boards.

42. Field visits. While useful for learning about United Nations assistance at country level, field visits were time-consuming to prepare, costly and, given the ease of use of information and communication technology, impractical to undertake more than necessary. The large delegations in joint field visits could also be intrusive; the Boards should ensure they travel in a responsible manner. They suggested dividing field visit delegations into subgroups so they could learn about different aspects of country conditions and United Nations assistance. The visits should be limited to one joint field visit and one individual visit by each Bureau yearly. They cautioned against using field visits to stage agency successes, noting that Board members needed to see challenges so the Boards could address them. They suggested making field visit programmes Bureau-driven (not agency driven), and balancing high-level and expert-level participation, so both political and the technical aspects could be related to the Boards.

Group 3 — Moderator: Mauritius

43. Group 3 addressed issues related to: bureaux; sessions; participation; field visits; and the joint meeting of the Boards.

44. Bureaux. They suggested: (a) improving the transparency of the Bureaux' proceedings, noting that Bureau discussions were not adequately passed on to the members of the regional groups; (b) harmonizing procedures of the different Bureaux, especially in organizational terms, so they would meet and report in a similar way; (c) discussing the possibility of having longer terms for Bureaux members with regional groups so they could discuss within their own Boards; and (d) improving communication between the different Bureaux, making maximum use of information and communications technology.

45. Sessions. The group suggested: (a) ensuring timely circulation of documents, addressing systematically any bottlenecks; (b) indicating on Board secretariat websites which documents had been freshly uploaded; (c) including observers on mailing lists; (d) spacing out the time between the annual sessions and the second regular sessions; and (e) holding informal meetings primarily at United Nations Headquarters to facilitate the participation of government missions.

46. Participation. The group highlighted the low attendance of Member States at joint meetings of the Boards and suggested exploring ways to make them more appealing and substantive, as a means of promoting greater participation.

47. Field visits. The group: (a) cautioned against using field visits to stage agency successes, noting that Board members needed to also appreciate the challenges faced by the UN system on the ground, to enable the Boards to have a more holistic appreciation of the work of the UN, and address any underlying or structural deficiencies impeding the effectiveness and efficiency of the work of the UN system on the ground; (b) suggested making field visit programmes Bureau-driven (rather than agency driven), and giving the Bureaux more time to discuss issues addressed in the field visits; (c) proposed limiting visits to one individual Executive Board field visit and one joint field visit per year; and (d) suggested balancing high-level and expert-level participation, as a means of better blending both political and technical aspects of the work.

48. Joint meeting of the Executive Boards. The group highlighted the following common issues could be discussed at joint meetings of the Boards going forward: (a) audit; (b) ethics; (c) cost recovery; and (d) topics related to the common chapter in the strategic plans of the agencies. It further suggested having the agencies submit an annual report on the status of implementation of the common chapter at the joint meeting of the Boards. The group felt that while transforming the joint meeting of the Boards into a decision-making body was seen as optimal on a number of issues, it was agreed that this proposal would need to be examined in greater detail, and required wider inclusive and participative discussions on procedures and other aspects, prior to any decision. However, it was felt that, in the meantime, the Boards should be encouraged to have more frequent joint briefings, informal meetings and discussions, all requiring inter-agency and inter-secretariat cooperation.

Group 4 – Moderator: Norway

49. Group 4 concurred with the views expressed by Group 3 and made the following additional comments:

50. Bureaux. The group stated that: (a) the Bureaux needed to be more relevant and impactful, with more Bureau-driven initiatives, while the secretariats should not be involved in political and substantive discussions; (b) Member States had a responsibility to represent their regional groups so Bureaux-level information could be passed on to regional groups to insure greater inclusivity.

51. Sessions. The group: (a) recommended that Executive Boards should limit the number and length of official statements by focusing national statements at the annual session (using the WFP Board as a model, in particular its use of roundtables and their physical setup, as a means of facilitating interaction); (b) noting that presentations of country programme documents (CPDs) took too much time and that follow-up should be at national level, the group suggested that CPDs be posted online in advance, and that approvals be made on a no-objection basis; and (c) raised the possibility of having a CPD session on the margins of the second regular session, or perhaps invite agencies and countries to attend a separate special session where CPD would be discussed and approved, which would allow for quality discussions on substantive issues.

52. Field visits. The group noted the value and usefulness of field visits, but expressed the view that there were too many and that the Boards should seek ways to make them more effective and relevant. The large delegations could also be intrusive at times, and there was a need to make sure that the visits be undertaken in a context appropriate manner. It also suggested institutionalizing the practice of dividing field visit delegations into subgroups, so that they are in a better position to learn about different aspects of the host country conditions and the support provided by the United Nations.

53. Joint meeting of the Boards. The group suggested more joint reporting and substantive discussions, and to give the joint meeting of the Boards legislative

authority to adopt decisions on joint processes, joint evaluations, joint audit reports, and joint follow-up to cross-cutting issues, such as sexual exploitation and abuse.

WFP perspective — presented by the President of the WFP Executive Board

54. The WFP Board President appreciated the issuance of the Presidents' non-paper, noting that it had been shared with the governing bodies of the other two Rome-based agencies, FAO and IFAD, which were considering its use as an input to benchmark against their own respective working methods. He highlighted that, in many areas of the working methods, WFP was already advanced in putting them into practice. The WFP Executive Board views the joint meetings of the Boards as an excellent opportunity to discuss common areas of interest among the governing bodies of the United Nations agencies, but these joint meetings should not have decision-making authority; the joint meeting of the Boards should not become another governing body. He underlined that from an institutional perspective, the dual reporting lines to ECOSOC and FAO would require approval of both legislative bodies for any substantive revisions of the rules and regulations governing the WFP Executive Board in the context of giving the JMB decision-making powers.

55. The WFP President also noted that:

(a) Having more frequent joint board meetings and briefings could be a good idea but that WFP Executive Board members faced difficulties to attend due to geographic distance; therefore, it was important for the WFP Executive Board to receive detailed summaries of those joint meetings;

(b) WFP would continue to undertake its current agreed practice of one joint field visit and one individual field visit per year; this was, therefore, not an issue for WFP;

(c) Similarly, the Bureau of the WFP Executive Board already has a handover process in place between the outgoing and incoming Bureaux; therefore, this was also not an issue for WFP;

(d) Limiting the length of documents presented and limiting the speaking roles of the Principals of the United Nations agencies at the JMB would ensure greater effectiveness and efficiency;

(e) Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment could be a good example of a cross-cutting issue to compare and share information in future joint meetings;

(f) The ideas of anticipation of election of Bureau members and extending their terms of office required further discussions and careful assessment of all expected implications;

(g) WFP Executive Board members shared the objective of an improved gender and geographic balance, both within the Executive Board and the Bureau, but considered this difficult to achieve.

Conclusion — A converging of views

56. The President of the Board of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, presiding over the lunchtime session, summarized the areas where there was a clear convergence in the discussions between each of the four working groups, constituting a core of common issues regarding the working methods of the Executive Boards.

57. Convergence of views were noted in the following areas:

(a) *Bureaux*. Making documentation related to each Board and each Bureau available to a wider readership, as a means of fostering greater transparency regarding the work of the Board;

(b) *Sessions*. Fostering a greater degree of transparency in Bureau and Board meetings, and identifying new and novel ways for members of regional groups to be briefed on Bureau proceedings;

(c) *Participation*. Encouraging the participation of non-governmental and civil society organizations and the private sector in future joint board meetings;

(d) *Field visits*. Limiting the number of field visits: one joint field visit and one individual Board visit; promoting a higher level of participation in field visits; and striking a better balance between high-level and expert-level participation.

(e) *Joint meeting of the Executive Boards*. Utilizing the joint meeting of the Executive Boards as an opportunity to discuss issues of common interest to all the Boards, including, *inter alia*, reports on (i) the status of implementation of the common chapter of the respective strategic plans; (ii) audit, ethics evaluation; (iii) gender strategy; and (iv) sexual exploitation and abuse and on sexual harassment.

58. In closing, the Chair noted that these converging issues could potentially form the basis for a roadmap in taking forward recommendations aimed at improving the working methods of the Executive Boards. A summary of the JMB discussions on Executive Board working methods would be circulated to all the Executive Boards and the respective secretariats, to coordinate further discussions, with a view to further the implementation of the QCPR mandate on the working methods of the Executive Boards. He closed the meeting by thanking delegations for their active participation and rich discussion.

C. Overcoming inequalities among and within countries, including gender inequality, to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals — reaching the poorest and most vulnerable first

59. The President of the Executive Board of WFP, chairing the afternoon session, welcomed the other presidents of the Executive Boards, the principals of the six United Nations organizations, the guest speakers, and the members of the Executive Boards to the interactive discussion on opportunities and challenges in addressing inequalities to achieve the Goals and identify critical steps required to tackle them.

60. The Executive Director of UNFPA stressed that inequalities shaped societies and shut people out of opportunities, stopped the exercising of rights, and held back social and economic progress. Despite advances, wealth and income inequalities persisted within and between countries, and global wealth was increasingly concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. While the overall share of people living in extreme poverty had fallen, it had not declined in the poorest countries due in large part to population growth, with too many people having not benefitted from global developments. Marginalized groups, especially women and girls, including adolescents, were the hardest hit by inequalities. The ICPD programme of action and the 2030 Agenda dovetailed in their approach to the intersectional, multidimensional nature of inequality, which, in order to be tackled effectively, required the coordinated efforts of the entire United Nations system. It was crucial to learn about the most marginalized and vulnerable and to ensure they were not left behind. Better population data helped to disaggregate need and inequality and provided the public a means to hold leaders accountable. It also meant addressing the various negative (social, cultural, policy and legal) barriers that resulted in entrenchment of inequality and perpetuation of unequal power dynamics.

61. The Executive Director of UN-Women echoed that assessment, noting that inequalities intersected and were pervasive within and between countries, held people back socially, affected communities economically and environmentally, distorted democratic systems, fuelled conflict and created a barrier to realizing human rights. Girls from poorer households were more vulnerable than girls from wealthier households. However, such inequalities were neither inevitable nor irreversible. UN-Women collaborated closely with all stakeholders, including the United Nations development system organizations, to bring about changes in institutions, policies and practices to make a difference. UN-Women had devised a system of metrics to determine the situation of marginalized women, including in refugee populations, to address trauma and shock, provide sexual and reproductive health services and health care, and receive protection support and legal aid. Part of those endeavours included mobilizing men and boys to become active participants in addressing these challenges.

62. The Chief, Population and Development Branch, UNFPA, moderated the interactive discussion with three guest speakers, focusing on the following topics regarding the interaction of different types of inequality: (a) macroeconomic inequalities between countries; (b) discriminatory social norms; and (c) United Nations work in Latin America to address these inequalities. She directed three rounds of questions to the three guest speakers, focusing on the following topics:

(a) How inequalities hamper the achievement of human rights; the role of the United Nations; and the impact on gender inequality;

(b) How addressing discriminatory social norms reduced inequalities; how accountability accelerated the reduction of inequalities and the realization of the 2030 Agenda; and what successful examples went beyond equity and service delivery to combat inequalities;

(c) The main challenges to promoting equality in Latin America; and how the United Nations could change the status quo, including in the light of the middle-income status of many countries in the region.

63. In response to the first round of questions, the Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University and faculty director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership stressed that assessing global macroeconomic policy through a human rights lens demonstrated that instead of being 'left' behind people were being 'pushed' behind. Because financial resources were key to the fulfilment of human rights, it was important to have international coordination around economic policies, an area in which the United Nations needed to play an active role.

64. Political and economic power allowed countries to make global economic decisions without regard for others, which meant power relations played a key role. Using human rights as a filter would bring the latent inequalities of the global economic system into light and make it possible to design a more equitable economic model. Similarly, because macroeconomic policies were male-biased — observable, for example, in how such policies viewed unpaid care traditionally provided by women — these policies perpetuated gender inequality. The focus of Goal 10 to regulate financial institutions gave the United Nations the mandate and a tool to address the regulatory framework for finance and address these root causes of inequality.

65. In response to the second round of questions, the Visiting Professor of Law at Georgetown University Law Center and Senior Advisor on Global Health and Human Rights spoke of how marginalized persons, such as poor women and adolescent girls, suffered disproportionately due to inequalities in health and legal coverage. The

conventional approach was to tackle that issue under the Sustainable Development Goals related to sexual and reproductive health and family planning.

66. However, practical experience showed that approach consistently fell short. The first lesson to learn was that there were serious unintended consequences to people's rights when assistance looked solely at service coverage indicators, or tried to not leave the poorest out by targeting them with services, as opposed to building systems that protected equality and rights. The second was that all individuals harboured within themselves a multitude of personal narratives; these multiple identities needed to be considered when prescribing remedial action. The third was that the Goals focused primarily on 'survive', secondly on 'thrive', but should instead focus on 'transforming' those conditions that systematically produced inequalities.

67. Accountability in such circumstances had to be about building constructive relationships around entitlement for rights holders and obligation for duty bearers. Nevertheless, ensuring accountability through the approach used for the Goals — gauging allocated funding against outputs and outcomes — was difficult. To be useful, accountability had to go beyond to focus on what data was not being gathered and identifying the things could not be quantified, which were important for structural transformation. Remedial actions should take all those aspects into consideration.

68. In response to the third round of questions, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, UNDP Resident Representative and UNFPA Resident Representative in Ecuador noted that despite progress Latin America remained the world's most unequal region, affecting four groups in particular: (a) indigenous peoples; (b) Afro-descendant populations; (c) rural women; and (d) people with disabilities. The first challenge was finding ways to reduce inequality sustainably. The second was that tackling inequalities was a political issue that demanded political will. The third challenge — centred on the region's economic structures, grounded in extractive industries and the use of low skilled labour — embodied two paradoxes: (a) the resources the industry generated were used to achieve the 2030 Agenda; and (b) indigenous economies were actually models for sustainable development, in opposition to the dominant economic structures.

69. He stressed that the United Nations impact on the region's development often went unnoticed because it built on a trusted relationship with the Government through the provision of policy advice, with national Governments naturally taking credit for positive results. The United Nations made its most visible contribution through policy interventions, data collection and knowledge generation, and by responding to misperceptions in response to human rights abuses. The United Nations had a responsibility to be a voice for those who were not being heard and to pursue greater inclusivity, including among its own staff.

70. The Presidents of the four Executive Boards, the Principals of the six United Nations organizations and the members of the Executive Boards were actively engaged in discussion throughout the session and provided a number of comments on how the United Nations development system should work jointly to overcome inequalities to achieve the Goals, notably the need to:

(a) Bridge the gap between countries so that no single country, especially the least development countries, was left behind;

(b) Pursue partnerships and multidimensional approaches built on disaggregated data and information to target the most marginalized;

(c) Expand programmes that dealt with destruction of the informal sector, on which many marginalized people depended for the livelihoods;

(d) Explore public-private partnership to address gender inequality and break down gender-blind structures in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and family planning;

(e) Use data disaggregation to expose the crisis of asset ownership (whereby a small number of people own most of the world's assets) and establish a more equitable economic system;

(f) Ensure gender-responsive financing, budgeting and economic policy, and revamp social structures to tackle the issue of women's unpaid work;

(g) Pursue comprehensive sexuality education to include men and adolescent boys as part of the solution to gender inequality and sexual exploitation and abuse;

(h) Focus on youth, and early childhood development, especially in Africa, through disaggregated data, technology, and personal narratives to reach the most marginalized;

(i) Recognize that the consumption patterns of industrialized countries was unsustainable and could not serve as the model for sustainable development.

71. In conclusion, the Deputy Executive Director of WFP noted that the examples given during the session clearly illustrated that the United Nations had its greatest impact when the organizations worked together.

72. The President of the Executive Board of UN-Women thanked delegations and the six United Nations organizations for their participation in the joint meeting of the Boards. Summarizing the main points, she highlighted the need to: (a) address the multidimensional nature of inequalities, which intersected within and between countries; (b) pursue multidimensional solutions to address intersecting inequalities; (c) take a people-centred approach; (d) address root causes of poverty and inequality; (d) engage in strategic partnerships with different stakeholders; (e) ensure accountability among all stakeholders and inclusivity; and (f) pursue greater resource mobilization. She underlined that in the 2030 Agenda Member States had committed to addressing inequalities, which required a coordinated United Nations development system in the field to break down gender-blind structures and policies. United Nations reform would only be meaningful if it made a difference in people's lives, especially the poor and most marginalized.

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